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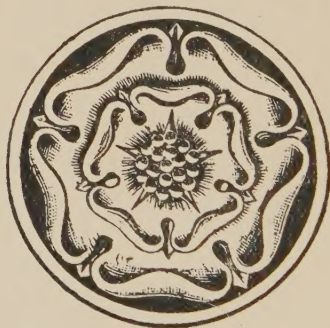
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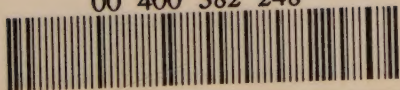
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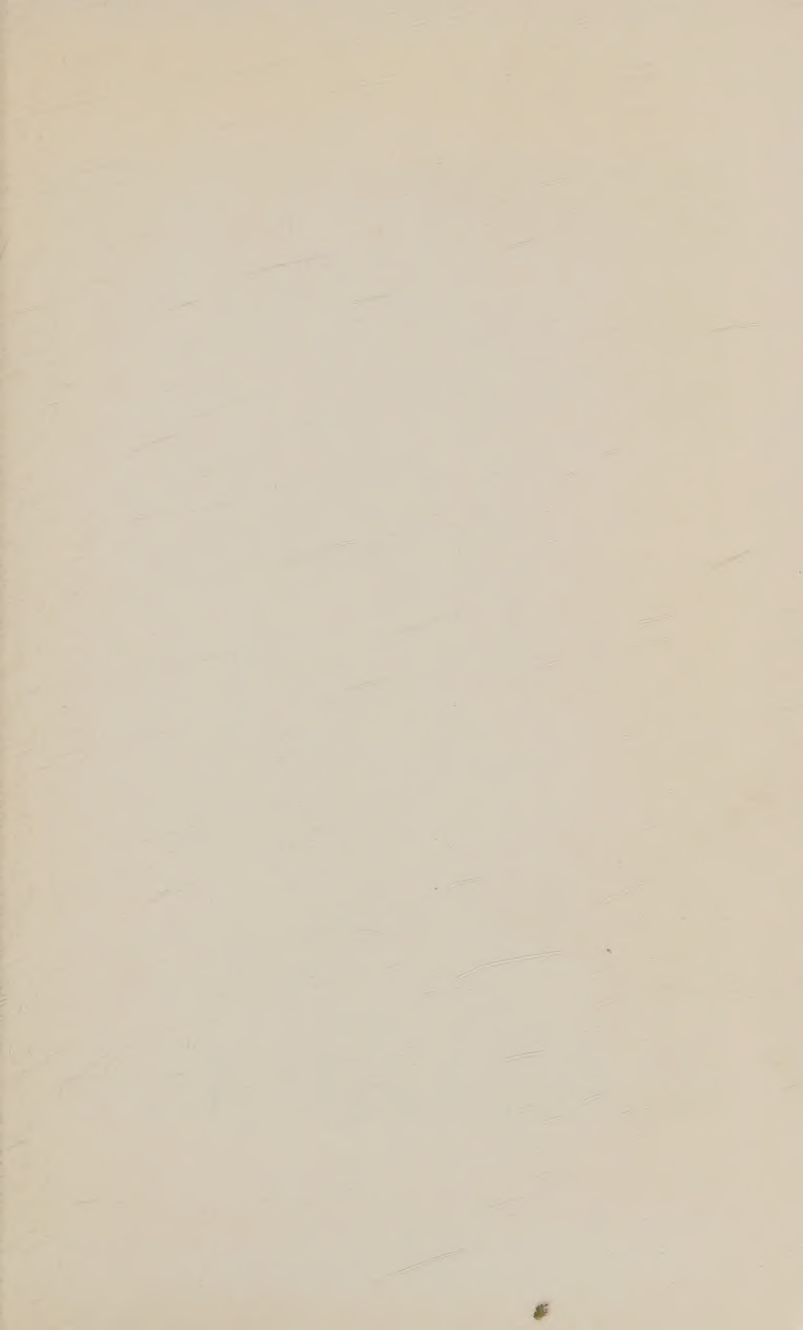
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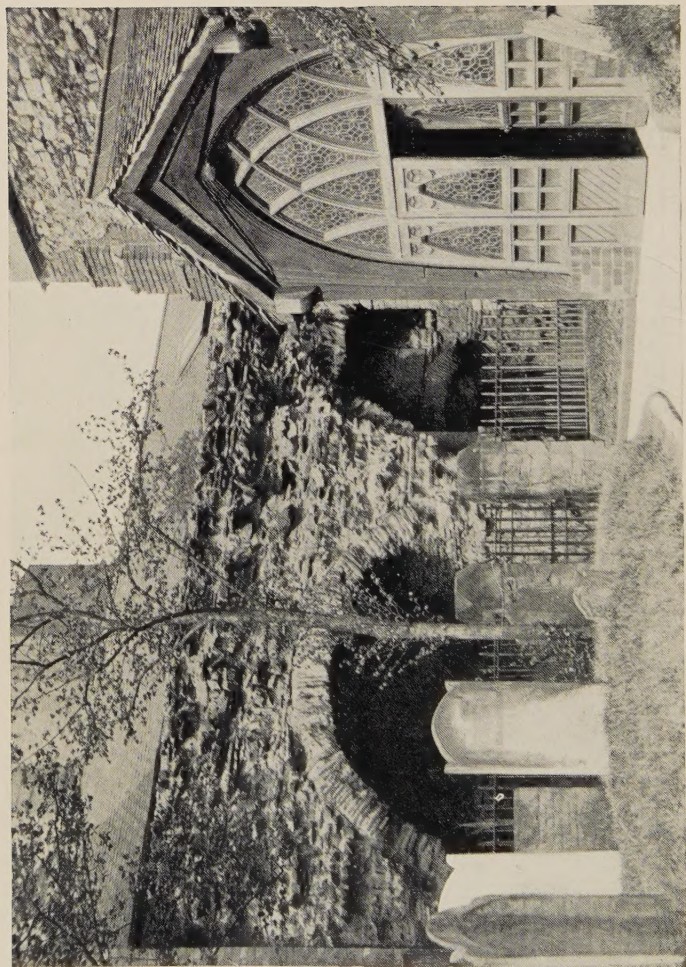


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JEWRY WALL FROM ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCHYARD

THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH TOWNS

A SHORT HISTORY OF
LEICESTER

BY

S. H. SKILLINGTON

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

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TO THE MEMORY OF

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PREFACE

MY aim in writing this book was to tell as much of the essential history of Leicester as could be expressed conveniently in ten chapters of moderate length. With what, if any, degree of success this aim has been accomplished is a question for others to decide; but I can honestly say that I have written throughout with a consistent regard for truth, and that nothing has been stated as a fact which, in my deliberate judgment, was not supported by good evidence. In getting together materials, especially for the early chapters, I was greatly helped by the published writings and personal kindness of Mr. A. Hamilton Thompson, M.A., F.S.A., Mr. Charles J. Billson, M.A., and the late Professor Haverfield. Mr. Hamilton Thompson did me the further service of critically reading my MS. before it was finally revised, and Mr. Billson was good enough to scrutinise very carefully the printed proof after I had myself done what I could to correct it. To Mr. George F. Farnham, M.A., F.S.A., who most helpfully discussed with me the problem of the stewardship, I am very grateful, as I also am to Mr. H. J. Francis, who generously gave me some extremely useful unpublished information about the Norman earls and their relatives. Others to whom I am indebted for valuable assistance of one kind or another are Mr. William Keay, M.I.C.E., Mr. G. E. Kendall, A.R.I.B.A., Mr. A. B. McDonald, A.R.C.A., the Rev. Canon James Went, M.A., and Mr. E. S. Pink,

M.A. My acknowledgments are also due to Mr. Walter Payne, of the Leicester Town Clerk's Office, and Mr. H. M. Riley, of the Municipal Reference Library, who, whenever I had occasion to trouble them, did all they could to facilitate research.

Whatever may be thought of my part of the book, there will be no difference of opinion about the excellence of the illustrations, and I count myself particularly fortunate in having secured the enthusiastic co-operation of Mr. R. Warden Harvey, M.A., from whose skilful photographs all these have been prepared. All the photographs were specially taken for this book, and each represents some building or other object now to be seen in Leicester.

S. H. SKILLINGTON.

20, VICTORIA PARK ROAD,
LEICESTER.

May, 1923.

CONTENTS

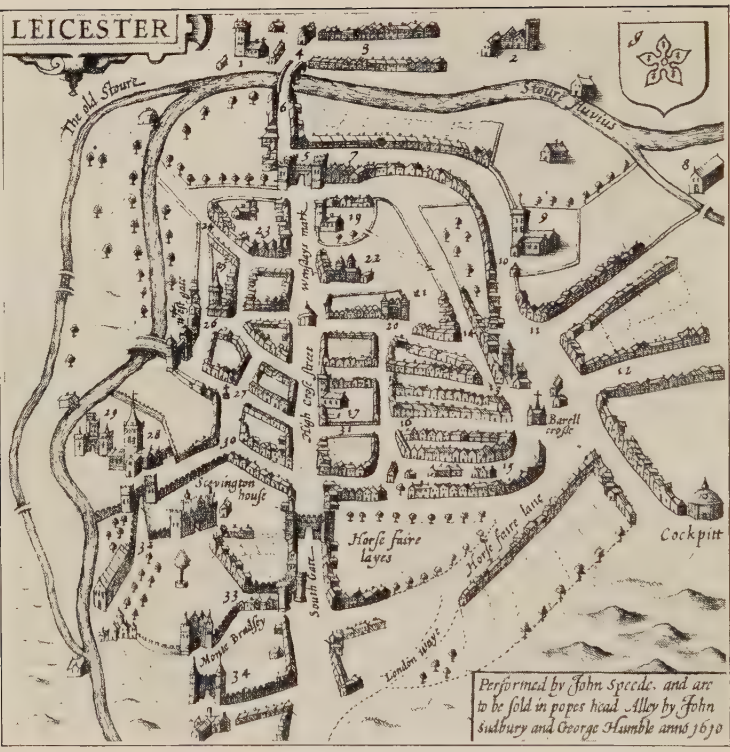
CHAPTER	PAGE
I. PRIMEVAL ECHOES - - - -	9
II. ROMAN, SAXON, AND DANE - - -	19
III. THE NORMAN EARLS - - - -	33
IV. SIMON DE MONTFORT - - - -	45
V. THE LANCASTRIAN EARLS - - -	56
VI. THE DUKEDOM AND THE CROWN - -	66
VII. BOROUGH GOVERNMENT IN THE MIDDLE AGES	78
VIII. THINGS NEW AND OLD - - - -	96
IX. THE REFORMATION AND THE SIEGE - -	113
X. THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN LEICESTER -	128
APPENDIX - - - - -	146
PEDIGREES - - - - - <i>facing</i>	156
INDEX - - - - -	157

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

JEWRY WALL FROM ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH-					
YARD	-	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
					FACING PAGE
SPEEDE'S PLAN OF LEICESTER	-	-	-	-	10
INTERIOR OF ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH	-	-	-	-	32
LEICESTER CASTLE AND ST. MARY'S CHURCH	-	-	-	-	48
LEICESTER CASTLE, EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRONT					
AND ROOF OF NORMAN HALL	-	-	-	-	64
TRINITY HOSPITAL CHAPEL	-	-	-	-	68
NEWARKE GATEWAY AND SOUTHGATE STREET	-	-	-	-	72
MEDIÆVAL BRIDGE AT AYLESTON	-	-	-	-	124

PHOTOGRAPHER: R. W. HARVEY, M.A.





Cheief places of ye Citie by figurs noted:

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. S. Leonards | 13. East Gate | 25. S. Nicholas |
| 2. Leicester Abbey | 14. Swines Market | 26. S. Nicholas |
| 3. Abbey Gate | 15. Satterdayes Market | Shambles |
| 4. Sundaye Bridge | 16. Cankwell Lane | 27. Redd Cross Street |
| 5. North gate | 17. S. Martines | 28. S. Maryes |
| 6. North gate Street | 18. S. Martins Street | 29. The Castell |
| 7. Sinuis gate | 19. Alhallowes | 30. Castell Street |
| 8. The Spittle | 20. High Street | 31. Black fryers lane |
| 9. S. Margrets | 21. Huntingdon place | 32. Ould Hospitall |
| 10. Church gate | 22. Woole Hall | 33. The new ewarke |
| 11. Belgrave gate | 23. Graye fryers | 34. The Grange |
| 12. Humberston gate | 24. Graye fryers gate | |

LEICESTER

CHAPTER I

PRIMEVAL ECHOES

GEOFFREY of Monmouth informs us that Leicester was founded by King Lear in the ninth century before Christ. As, however, the tradition current in his own day was the chronicler's sole authority for this statement, before considering its precise relation to historic fact we shall do well to enquire what may be learned from the more tangible remains of the city and neighbourhood. These comprise military earthworks, sepulchral mounds and urns, weapons of war and of the chase, and such things as personal ornaments, domestic utensils, agricultural implements and workmen's tools. Specimens of these various objects have been discovered in and around Leicester, and their existence proves that in the centuries before the Roman invasion the inhabitants had learned to cultivate the soil, to organise themselves for defence or attack, to live with increasing regard to convenience and decorum, and to exhibit skill and imagination in the things they fashioned. That they had formed some conception of personal immortality is attested by the manner of their burials and by the provision in their tombs of articles deemed necessary for the soul's transition to another sphere. From these visible survivals it may be broadly inferred that, at some remote period of antiquity, a party of nomadic Britons came to the river now called the Soar, and in making their home upon its bank planted the

germ of modern Leicester. The rude encampment of these first settlers was occupied in turn by successive bands of the same island race, and was eventually subdued by tribes of immigrant Celts, who were more or less acquainted with the arts and civilisation of western Europe.

The material witness to a sequence of this kind is confirmed by certain local customs which bear the marks of primitive origin, and by one or two legends, obviously Celtic, the most transparent of which attributes the foundation of the city to King Lear. This mythical "ruler over the Britaynes," whose domestic afflictions were raised to the heights of tragic drama by Shakespeare, was in Geoffrey of Monmouth's time regarded as a genuine historical personage. Later research, however, has shown him to be a character of popular romance, evolved from Llŷr or Lêr, the Poseidon of the ancient Celtic mythology. It is in the gradual metamorphosis of this obsolete god, considered in relation to the etymology of *Leicester*, that we find the explanation of the city's reputed association with an imaginary potentate.

The Soar, which flows through Leicester and erstwhile formed its western boundary, was in early times known as the *Leir*; and *Legra-ceaster*, the Saxon name for the borough, was a translation of the Celtic *Caer-Leir*, the fortified encampment on the Leir. With the original identity of the mediæval Lear in our minds, we see that the river was named after the most appropriate deity of the people who lived on its bank, and the significance of the legend is immediately apparent. Many British streams are called after Celtic spirits, and an exact parallel is found in the French Loire, which likewise derived its name from the god Llŷr; the Leicestershire village of Leire (*Legre* in Domesday), on a tributary of the Soar, is doubtless another settlement of the same period. This interpretation gains support from the existence, in another part of

the county, of a large entrenchment known as "King Lud's Rents"; for Lud also was a Celtic deity (Llûdd), transformed by romantic mutation into a British king, and the belief that he ruled the sky was long anterior to the fable which connects him with London.

The fact that superseded deities tend to survive in grotesque forms probably accounts for the tradition of Black Anna, the supposed inhabitant of a solitary cave on the Dane Hills, a stretch of high ground west of the city and formerly on the outskirts of Leicester Forest. Behind a withered oak which screened the entrance to her "bower," this immemorial night-fear was understood to be continually lurking, in readiness to pounce upon such children as might linger in the fields, and it was said that when she had secured her victims she clawed them to death with her talons, sucked the blood from their bodies and hung up their skins to dry. Such was the tale which alarmed children until late in the nineteenth century; but about forty years ago the cavern was demolished, and now, the neighbourhood having become residential and the youth of Leicester sophisticated, its infamous occupant is well on her way to oblivion.

By some the atrocious Anna has been regarded as a mere figment invented to scare children; others have seen in her a distorted memory of Annis Scott, a Benedictine anchoress who dwelt in a cave on Charnwood Forest and now lies buried in Swithland church. The story, however, has more force than is usual in the fabrications of nursemaids, and a mild Christian ascetic could hardly have been the prototype of such a ferocious beldam. We seem to get on a truer scent when we turn to the old mythology which animated the traditions of Lear and Lud, and find that its most ancient divinity, the mother of its pantheon and the goddess of the fruitful earth, was variously named Ana, Danu, Anu, and Dôn. This Demeter of the Britons

and the Gaels survives in Irish folk-lore as Aine, a banshee or "woman of the hill," and within living memory was annually propitiated on St. John's Eve by a magic ritual to ensure fertility. In Munster she was worshipped as the goddess of prosperity and abundance, and two mountains near Killarney were called in her memory "the Paps of Anna." Having regard to the other local evidences of Celtic occupation, these instances of the maternal goddess's traditional vitality, with the similarity of name, irresistibly suggest that the Leicester harpy was her legendary caricature, and encourage the fancy that the Dane Hills may once have been the Hills of Danu. In the grim exploits of Black Anna may be discerned the vulgar memorial of the terrible rites which Julius Cæsar tells us were performed by the Druids, who taught that crops would be fertile in proportion to the harvest of blood, and periodically sacrificed human lives, in the groves of ancient forests, for the appeasement of their gods. That such cruel ceremonies were performed in the neighbourhood of Celtic Leicester may be taken for granted, and, in accordance with usage, no place could be more likely for their celebration than Anna's domain on the edge of the Forest.

The same rather wild locality was the annual starting-point of a remarkable hunt, which survived officially into the latter half of the eighteenth century, and then degenerated into a rough holiday, known as the "Dane Hills Fair," that continued until about fifty years ago. Of the original observance, which he had no doubt frequently witnessed, Throsby wrote: "It had long been customary on Easter Monday for the Mayor and his brethren, in their scarlet robes, attended by their proper officers, in due form, to go to a certain close, called Black Annis' Bower Close, parcel of, or bordering upon, Leicester Forest, to see the diversion of hunting, or rather the trailing of a cat before a pack of hounds." On these anniversaries

a festive crowd was wont to assemble on the Dane Hills before noon, when a cat drenched in a solution of aniseed was attached to the tail of a horse, which was ridden by a devious route through the lanes and streets amid the acclamations of the populace. Hounds and hunters followed the scent to the mayor's house, where a feast was laid for the principal sportsmen. The civic and customary elements in this observance, with the fact (since ascertained) that the cat was originally a hare, bring it within the same category as numerous hare customs still kept up in Leicestershire and other districts, that are altogether inexplicable unless they arose from the magic rituals of ancient paganism. There is an immense variety of hare superstitions, which probably had their inception in the time when this creature was a totem held in mystic veneration by our prehistoric ancestors. The irregular course of the Leicester cat may have been fortuitous, but it recalls Sir Thomas Browne's mention of the hare's "augurial" reputation, and more especially of a story of Boadicea, who, before one of her victorious battles, is said to have "opened her bosom and let go a hare, which she had there concealed, that the augurs might thence proceed to divine. The frightened animal made such twistings and windings in her course, as, according to the then rules of judging, prognosticated success."

At first sight the ritual origin of the unedifying amusement of bull-baiting appears to be suggested by the old Leicester borough ordinance: "that no butcher kylle no bull to selle withinne this towne but yf hit be bayted before in payne of forfeiture thereof." Miss Bateson, however, pointing to a Cambridge law against the sale of "the flesh of bulls, unless they are baited or fed with grass in a stall," understood the Leicester regulation to have a similar meaning. Though the records are tantalisingly ambiguous, Miss Bateson's interpretation is probably correct. In 1363

a butcher named Lambert was charged before the court of the Gild Merchant, "on account of the sale of the flesh of driven bulls (*taurorum infugatorum*)," an offence which he aggravated by "contradicting and contemning the Mayor," Thomas of Beeby, "in the Market-place with base language." The normal word for "to drive" is *fugare*, and the usual mediæval equivalent of "not driven" would be *non fugatorum*, though *infugatorum* might conceivably appear in that sense. *Infugare*, however, sometimes means "to chase," and a scholar at the British Museum writes that he should not be surprised to find it meaning "to drive in," which is getting very near to the translation of Miss Bateson, who was no doubt thinking of beasts which had been driven in to the market. Lambert, who ultimately confessed, was pardoned on finding a surety of ten pounds, but the Bench warned him that if he offended again he would be fined "100s. of gold or silver without any ransom." The penalty for simple infringement of the Cambridge ordinance was forty pence.

Though the Leicester regulation was perhaps merely hygienic, there are other reasons for thinking that bull-baiting, which was no doubt popular in Leicester as elsewhere, originated in the sacred rites of pagan antiquity. The Bull Running at Stamford, a town in close commercial touch with Leicester throughout the Middle Ages, was a definitely municipal observance, in which the mayor took an official part, and had the further characteristic of ritual survivals that it was regarded as the condition of a grant of land by a feudal overlord. The bull-fights of Spain, which have all the marks of authorised public rituals and take place on Sundays and religious feast-days, are similarly organised by the municipal authorities.¹ Mrs. Gascoigne Hartley says that, though the contests were introduced into Spain by the Moors, their ceremonious and spectacular elements were adopted from

the Roman combats, the influence of which had survived among the old Spaniards. These facts make one think that the Romans may have introduced into England a semi-ritualistic custom, possibly derived from the ancient Greek Bull Drivings, which were solemn and elaborate state ceremonies evolved from a primitive rite known as the Driving-out of Ox-hunger. A bear ceremony, exactly similar in essentials, is still practised in the remote island of Saghalien and among the Gilyaks of Eastern Siberia. If it could be shown that the bull- and bear-baitings of mediæval England sprang from ancient sacred rites, we should understand how they acquired a prescriptive justification in the eyes of our forefathers.

Several customs of a Saturnalian type were observed in Leicestershire until comparatively recent years. For instance, the church bells at Hinckley might be rung for a trifling payment on Shrove Tuesday, and at the same season the urchins of Frisby-on-the-Wreake were in the habit of locking their master out of school until he consented to grant them a holiday. Similar acts of insubordination occurred at the Leicester Free Grammar School, as is shown by the chamberlains' account for 1583, which records the payment by certain boys "towards the mendinge of a wyndowe broken at the shutting of there Master forthe of the same schoole." The most notable of these tolerated breaches of decorum in the borough was the "Whipping Toms," a public diversion that every Shrove Tuesday disturbed the calm of the Newarke, a sober residential area once collegiate. Early in the morning a crowd used to assemble in this venerable square, where, at the sound of the Pancake Bell, it was customary for a number of rough lads to begin a most disorderly game played with knobbed sticks and a wooden ball. When this had proceeded for a time, three lusty fellows (the "Toms"), armed with long whips and accompanied by three men with

hand-bells, arrived on the scene and commenced to attack the players, whom they tried to lash out of the enclosure. Excited spectators joined in the tumult, which became general, and a great deal of promiscuous violence ensued. This annual riot was endured until 1846, when it was suppressed by Parliament. In the same year two troops of dragoons, a large body of constables and the reading of the Riot Act were required to put down a somewhat similar traditional contest in the Market Place at Derby.

A secondary feature of the Newarke celebrations was the brutal game of throwing cudgels at live cocks, which was abolished at Leicester in 1784. This detestable practice, thought to be of totemistic origin, was a traditional pastime in the middle of the fourteenth century; for in 1355 the scholars of Ramera petitioned their master for a cock to throw sticks at, according to custom, for their entertainment. Before the end of the eighteenth century public sentiment declined any longer to countenance "an abuse of time so much the more shocking as it is shown in tormenting that very creature which seems by Nature intended for our remembrance to improve it."

The association of these observances with the spring confirms the rest of the evidence that they had their origin in primitive times when the Britons, like the backward races of to-day, practised the magic rites of an elementary nature-worship. Early folk, conscious of their dependence on the seasons' rotation, had special reverence for the period when nature awoke from her wintry trance and the life of the fields was visibly renewed, and by their naïve magic they instinctively sought to encourage the natural processes upon which they relied for their sustenance. In course of time it came to be recognised that "the alternations of summer and winter, spring and autumn, were not merely the results of their own magical rites, but that some deeper cause, some mightier power, was at work

behind the shifting scenes of nature." Such customs and traditions as have been discussed in this chapter are the time-faded remnants of the most rudimentary sacred conceptions, and of the mythologies which followed them, and, when studied with common sense and imaginative sympathy, they enable us to form an intelligent idea of the process by which man has gradually been led to look through nature up to nature's God.

The St. John's Stone, which formerly stood in a field called Johnstone Close, near the site of Leicester Abbey, brings us back to the Celtic tradition which occupied our attention some pages back. In 1815 this monolith was about seven feet high, but it steadily diminished in size during the nineteenth century, and was eventually broken up by the tenant of the field, who was not romantic. So long as it was visible the stone excited a certain amount of popular trepidation, and a belief was current that fairies danced round it by night. Sites once dedicated to obsolete religions are often said to be haunted by these sprightly fragments of old broken gods, and from time immemorial visits had been paid to this particular antiquity on St. John's Day, in commemoration of "a festival [Roman] which was formerly held there, a vestige of old fire and sun-worship." The tradition doubtless originated in the solar worship of the ancient Celts.

The religion of the Celts centred round four great days, which marked the rise and decline of the sun's influence. These were Beltaine, at the beginning of May; Midsummer Day; the feast of Lugh, the sun-god, in August; and the mournful Samhain, when solar power was overcome by the forces of winter. In the Christian calendar these were superseded by May Day, St. John's Day, Lammas, and Hallowe'en, and their rites became merged in the celebrations of the Church. In many French towns, until the time of Louis XIV., it was customary on St. John's Day for

wolves, foxes and cats to be placed in baskets and thrown upon bonfires, in the official presence of the mayor and sheriffs. The wretched animals thus barbarously maltreated were substitutes for the human victims of earlier pagan holocausts. In Ireland these midsummer observances took a more harmless form, and came to be regarded as a magic precaution against evil spirits, while in England they appear to have been mere customary celebrations, with bonfires, conducted in a holiday spirit. On elevated ground near Humberston, a village near Leicester, is another monolith, called the Host Stone, which is also said to have been the resort of fairies, and to have exercised a malign influence upon parishioners who treated it with disrespect. A great deal has been written about this stone, and arguments have been used to connect it with the St. John's Stone. No definite conclusion has been reached, and the most that can be said is that each was probably a separate centre of the same cult. Perhaps both, and the many similar monuments scattered about the country, belong to the same class as the single Hele Stone outside the main circle at Stonehenge.

¹ In a recent issue of a London newspaper there appeared photographs of a comic bull-fight in Barcelona. The writer of the descriptive matter beneath these says that such travesties of what has always been regarded as a solemn ceremony would have horrified the Spaniards of a past generation.

CHAPTER II

ROMAN, SAXON, AND DANE

FROM about 50 A.D. until their withdrawal in the fifth century Leicester was in the hands of the Romans, who called it *Ratæ Coritanorum*, the encampment of the *Coritani*, the Celtic tribe which occupied the midlands and what is now Lincolnshire. The name *Ratæ* was equivalent to the Celtic *rath*, a fortress, the root of which appears in the adjacent place-names Ratby and Ratcliffe, and its combination with the tribal name indicates that the town was the capital of the cantonal area formerly administered by the *Coritani*. According to Professor Haverfield, Romanised Leicester might be compared to Jane Austen's Highbury, which was "a large and populous village, almost amounting to a town." No written memorials survive, but the material remains show that the place enjoyed considerable social importance and contained numerous residents whose circumstances enabled them to live a more or less luxurious life. The most important architectural relics have been found in Highcross Street, High Street and St. Nicholas' Street, which correspond with the two mediæval high streets that intersected each other at the High Cross and divided the approximately rectangular enclosure of the town into what were afterwards known as the four quarters. It is generally assumed that *Ratæ* was protected by stone walls, but, though for more than thirty years a watchful eye has been kept upon all excavations, not a single trace of Roman masonry has ever been dis-

covered. But, as Roman coins, fragments of pottery and other oddments have constantly been found along the line of the mediæval wall and ditch, the most reasonable conclusion seems to be that the town was defended on three sides by an earthen rampart and a fosse, the rampart being replaced by a wall in the Middle Ages, and on the west by the natural impediment of the Soar. Professor Haverfield was predisposed to think that there had been walls on all four sides, but in the absence of tangible evidence he did not permit himself to be dogmatic.

A remarkable piece of masonry, known as the "Jewry Wall," which stands between St. Nicholas' church and the river, has been variously identified with the West Gate, part of a temple of Janus, a portion of the Town Baths, and a remnant of the Forum. The baths theory was favoured by Professor Haverfield, who pointed out that if it was really the West Gate, excavation immediately north and south of it would almost certainly reveal vestiges of the assumed wall's foundations. The Jewry Wall, which is certainly Roman and probably got its name through proximity to the mediæval Jews' quarter, is partly composed of bricks, which do not appear to have been used again in Leicestershire until Kirby Muxloe castle was built at the end of the fifteenth century, and partly of Derbyshire grit-stone, that was presumably brought on rafts, by the Derwent, the Trent and the Soar, to within a few yards of its present position. This sturdy old wall, which has withstood the human and elemental assaults of nearly two thousand years, is a striking monument to the building ability of the ancient Romans, who rejected the perishable local stone, saw that the Leicester clay would make thoroughly serviceable bricks, and compounded a mortar of exceptional tenacity and hardness. Some of the bricks from the wall were used in the construction of St. Nicholas' church.

In a field near the Twelve Bridges, about a mile from the Jewry Wall, is the sole remaining fragment of an earthwork called the Raw Dykes, which in the seventeenth century extended, between the Soar and the Ayleston Road, to the site of the present infirmary. This earthwork has always excited antiquarian curiosity, and many conjectures have been made as to its original purpose. The name seems to be related to the Celtic *rath*, and Mr. Hollings thought "the singular double embankments" might be "regarded as the boundary of the British stronghold or location, to which the Roman *Ratæ* was indebted for its name." This is perhaps the most intelligent hypothesis that has yet appeared in print. Some months ago, however, it occurred to Mr. William Keay, architect to the Leicestershire County Council, that the embankments might be the remains of an aqueduct by which drinking-water was conveyed to the town. It seemed to him that the existing British wells could hardly provide enough of this vital necessity for the augmented population, and for the Roman soldiers who from time to time were quartered in the town, and that, as the main sewer emptied itself into the Soar near the Jewry Wall, the only means of obtaining an adequate supply of unpolluted water would be to draw it from a higher reach of the river. Mr. Keay has not yet been able to go into the matter fully; but he has satisfied himself that water could have been diverted from the river to the southernmost end of the dyke, *i.e.*, the surviving portion, and certain preliminary investigations lead him to think that it could have been made to travel from the neighbourhood of the Twelve Bridges to a point between the river and the Jewry Wall. The theory is consistent with what we know of the Romans' practical genius, and it is to be hoped that Mr. Keay will soon find leisure to make the technical calculations he has in mind.

An interesting and self-explanatory memento of the Roman occupation is the cylindrical milestone, three feet six inches high and twenty-three inches in diameter, that was found on the Fosse Road near Thurmaston in 1771, and narrowly escaped the indignity of being turned into a garden-roller by a Mr. Goodrich, of that village, to whose premises it was first of all conveyed. Upon the stone's surface is the mutilated inscription :

IMP CA S
DY TRAIAN PARTH FD EP
AIAN HADRIAN B
POT IV COS III A RATIS
II

which, *in extenso*, means : "To the Emperor Cæsar Trajanus Hadrianus, son of the divine Trajanus Parthicus, and grandson of the divine Nerva Augustus, father of his country, in the fourth year of his Tribunicial power and the third year of his Consulship. From Rataë 2 miles." This monument attracted little attention on its first discovery, but Dr. Percy, of the *Reliques*, who saw it in Mr. Goodrich's garden, made some enquiry into its character, and widespread interest was aroused by Dr. Richard Farmer, a native of Leicester and sometime Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who reported upon it to several learned societies. In 1783, by order of the Corporation, the stone was erected upon a square pedestal in Belgrave Gate, where for some years it supported a lamp and formed the centre of an experimental market. In 1824 the lamp was replaced by a cross, and in 1844, at the instance of the Literary and Philosophical Society, the stone itself was removed to the Mechanics' Institute in Wellington Street, whence it was transferred to the newly-opened Town Museum in 1849. Writing to the

curator of that institution, Professor Haverfield said : " The date is about A.D. 120-121. It cannot be called the oldest milestone in Britain, as there are others of the same age which are not dated so precisely, but may be a year or two older, *or* a few years later, *or* precisely the same date. There are others more perfect in form and lettering, in my judgment. I think the lettering on it has been unskilfully or wilfully tampered with, but it is quite a good specimen."

Many capitals and columns of various styles, such as would belong to public buildings, have been found near St. Nicholas' church and St. Martin's, which appears to have been erected on the site of a Roman temple. Of the kind of worship practised at Leicester we have no specific knowledge, but most likely it was the accommodated blend of Roman and Celtic religions which, in various proportions, was usual in civilian towns. The Romans were tolerant in matters of belief, and examples survive of Roman and Celtic deities represented in amicable juxtaposition on sculptured tablets. The inscriptions on these are invariably in Latin, and the British gods have Latinised names, such as *Nodens*, who was akin to the Irish Nuada of the silver hand, and was worshipped at Lydney in Gloucestershire. In such combinations the Roman deity is the dominant partner; but no attempt was made to destroy local cults, though the invaders suppressed Druidism and its cruel rites, and were inimical to Christianity. However, three British bishops were present at continental councils in the first half of the fourth century, and Pelagius, a British theologian, was able to advance unorthodox opinions, upon divine grace and original sin, which in 418 were pronounced heretical by the Western Church. How far Leicester was concerned with these ideas it is impossible to say, but doubtless the predominating faith was the blend of Roman and Celtic mythology generally accepted in places of its type, while in the purely military

districts religion meant "a kitchen-midden of all sorts of cults heaped up from all quarters of the Empire."

Among the domestic monuments of Romanised Leicester are several tessellated pavements, some of which are to be seen in their original positions. The most remarkable of these is protected by a special chamber, built about twenty years ago, beneath the Great Central Railway station. The more closely this pavement is examined the more one is impressed by the adaptive ingenuity of its makers; for the tesserae, which display a great variety of colour, are all composed of local materials. Another good specimen is in the cellar of a shop in St. Nicholas' Street, and a representation in mosaic of the story of Cyparissus, which was found in Highcross Street in 1675, is shown in the Museum. Other interesting pavements have been found in different parts of the town and amid the remains of a suburban villa, apparently of the courtyard type, which were accidentally brought to light in 1782 at Dannett's Hall, the Cherry Orchard, a few hundred yards beyond the West Bridge. Further excavations on this site in 1851 and 1868 revealed several pavements and flue-tiles, with a short column of Ketton stone and a bronze statuette of "Apollo or Jupiter." Most of these objects, together with a ground-plan of the villa, are now in the Museum, where they are exhibited with various capitals of columns and other architectural details, a heavy stone tank, and a quern or hand-mill of the kind frequently discovered in the locality.

The Roman finds exhibited in the special historic room of the Museum include examples of Samian ware, stamped with conventional patterns and rude classical figures; Salopian and Upchurch vessels of different kinds; and fragments of the interesting pottery made at Castor, near Peterborough, and decorated with

vividly-imagined animal forms and graceful designs which are obviously in the Celtic tradition. Every one of these delicate ornaments is the personal work of an individual artist, who laid it on by a process similar to that employed by modern confectioners when embellishing their cakes with patterns in sugar. The native speech, customs and arts doubtless survived to some extent in the country districts, which are often none the worse for being more conservative than the towns; but that Latin was the common language of *Ratae*, as of other populous centres, is demonstrated by a tile upon which a workman has inscribed: "Primus fecit X"—"Primus has made ten (tiles)." A tile at Silchester is similarly marked "Fecit tubul (um) Clementinus"—"Clementinus made this box-tile." Another Leicester graffito reads: "VERE-CVND A LYDIA LVCIVS GLADIATOR," and is supposed to be a love-token presented by a performer named Lucius to a girl who had excited his regard.¹ There has been much speculative argument about the mark "IIIVλ" impressed with a die upon a roof-tile discovered in the town. Professor Haverfield took this to be the stamp of the 8th Legion, which may have been in Leicester about 43 A.D. The thoughtless inversion of the letters is not uncommon in such marks; the initial representing *Legio*, which looks like the Greek λ, is an unfamiliar Latin form of the letter *L*.

In the same room is a collection of glass urns partly filled with calcined human bones. These vessels, which have narrow necks flanked by small handles, have been unearthed in various parts of the Roman area, and in one instance, if we assume that the southern boundary coincided with the mediæval wall, a short distance beyond it.² The minor exhibits in the room include an array of needles, pins and other neat instruments made of bone or horn; a bronze steel-yard; several glass beads and bottle-stoppers; a set

of lignite armlets; a bronze bust, found in Redcross Street, and an assortment of buckles, brooches, finger-rings, chains with ornamental pendants, spoons, etc., of the same metal. These personal and domestic articles materially help us to picture the daily life of the period, and great credit is due to someone for their orderly and intelligible arrangement.

The New Walk, on which the Museum is situated, follows approximately the line of a Roman road which led from the vicinity of the mediæval South Gate of Leicester to a place called Medbourne, near the south-east border of the county. This road is sometimes marked on modern maps of Roman Britain as part of the *Via Devana*, a presumed main road from Colchester to Chester. The *Via Devana*, however, is not mentioned in the Itinerary of Antoninus, which gives the chief stations on all the great British roads, and the evidence that there ever was a Roman road from Colchester to Chester is by no means convincing. Professor Haverfield was of opinion that our local way, properly known as the Gartree Road, merely led from Leicester to the villa of some influential person at Medbourne. The Fosse Road, upon which the Thurmaston milestone stood, passed through the main street of *Ratae*, from east to west, and joined the Watling Street at *Venonæ*, now called High Cross, which is regarded as the centre of England.

There is no doubt that Leicester possessed the town hall, temples, public baths, market-place, shops and hotels usual in municipalities and cantonal capitals, and that, like other Romano-British towns, its streets were laid out on the orthodox chess-board plan. The dwelling-houses would not be set in continuous rows, but built to suit individual requirements, as is still the custom in most villages. Each town was the head of a dependent district, and local government within this area was carried on through the *civitas* or city-state, the country districts outside being apparently

administered under the *villa* system of *demesne* farms and serfs or *coloni*. The municipal authority of *Ratae*, therefore, extended for some distance into the surrounding country, so that "what we might now call the town and county government more or less coincided." It is not clear whether villa estates within the cantonal areas enjoyed any form of separate jurisdiction; but it may be regarded as certain that Leicester was the legally-constituted head of a large rural district, and thus at an early date acquired the sort of distinction which belongs to a county town.

The Romanised area of Britain was separated from the Empire after the year 407, and the Roman tradition practically died out during the fifth or early sixth century. Early in the fourth century it had become necessary, as a defence against piratical invaders, to erect along the coasts of East Anglia, Kent and Sussex a series of forts which were placed under the command of an officer known as the Count of the Saxon Shore. When, in the fifth century, the English came and settled in the Roman area, most of the Romanised inhabitants were either killed or sold into slavery, and the civic institutions and customs imposed by the Romans were of necessity overthrown. Such Romanised Britons as escaped the ravages of war fled westwards and were absorbed by the Celtic population beyond the provincialised area. To these causes may be assigned the Celtic revival, which manifested itself a few generations after the departure of the Imperial legions, and the almost complete absence of a definite Roman tradition.

In the six centuries that followed, Leicester shared the unsettlement caused by successive invasions and the chronic state of warfare which made the Anglo-Saxon-Danish period a chaotic interval of disruptive violence. During that interval, however, heroic efforts were made to establish Christianity on an

organised basis ; the foundations of a feudal system of land tenure were laid ; the country was divided into shires, each with a shire-moot, which later became the sheriff's court ; and the achievements of a few high-minded patriots, of whom the best-remembered is King Alfred, shone out like good deeds in a naughty and self-seeking world. In Saxon England agriculture was conducted on the three-field system, believed by Mr. Seebohm to have been practised on Roman villa-estates, from which he derives the manorial system which, under other names, was in operation long before the Normans came. The three open fields round Leicester were the East (St. Margaret's), the South (St. Mary's), and the West Field. This method, which survived for many centuries in villages, was modified at Leicester by the creation of separate manors within the ancient fields. Practically the whole of the East Field was granted to the Norman bishop of Lincoln, while much of the West Field became the manor of Bromkinsthorpe, either before or after the Conquest.

The importance of the Anglo-Saxon bishopric, which existed precariously at Leicester when the organisation of the Church was being gradually formed in the face of many difficulties, has been somewhat magnified in local tradition. The evangelisation of Mercia, in which Leicester was situated, was begun by Peada, son of the heathen Penda, whose marriage to the Northumbrian king's daughter was made conditional upon his conversion to Christianity, and the baptism of himself and two followers. Bede states that, after the necessary rites had been performed by Bishop Finan, Peada selected "four priests, who for their erudition and good life were found proper to instruct and baptise his nation," and returned home with great joy. After King Penda's death "Diuma, one of the aforesaid priests, was made bishop of the Middle Angles, as also of the Mercians,

being ordained by Bishop Finan; for the scarcity of priests was the occasion that one prelate was set over two nations." Diuna, "having in a short time gained many people to our Lord, died among the Middle Angles, in the county called Feppingham." In regard to the Anglo-Saxon bishops associated with Leicester, Mr. Hamilton Thompson writes: "The extent of their diocese is very problematical. I should say roughly that they had jurisdiction in Mercia east of Watling Street from 737 to 869, when the Danish invasions put an end to the see: the boundaries of Saxon dioceses were very vague, and depended on what happened to be the civil boundaries for the time being. . . . It is doubtful whether these dioceses had any proper organisation, and I think that the first see of Leicester (680-705), which was administered by St. Wilfrid, a large land-owner in Mercia, from 692 to 705, was purely a missionary bishopric, the first holder of which, Cuthwine, made Leicester his headquarters—*i.e.*, he was bishop *at*, rather than *of*, Leicester (*cf.* Ælheard, who is called 'biscop æt,' not 'on,' 'Dorca ceastre,' in A.S.C. ann. 897). I do not think that much more could be said of the later bishops from 737. As to their cathedral church, nothing definite can be said, though one would naturally think that a bishop who took his title from Leicester would set up his stool in a church within the town." Torthelm, who was consecrated in 737, is said to have been followed by ten other bishops. About 870 Mercia surrendered to the Danes, and the see was thereafter administered from Dorchester, in Oxfordshire. The last bishop associated with Leicester was Leofwine (d. *circa* 965), who united the sees of Dorchester and Leicester, and, Mr. Thompson says, "may very well be regarded as the first bishop under whom the large territory which afterwards became the bishopric of Lincoln acquired its definite limits." From the Danish conquest of Mercia until

919 the churches of the midlands lay desolate and forsaken.

The local tradition that the church of St. Margaret occupies the site of an Anglo-Saxon cathedral has been plausibly justified by Leland's statement that, when he visited Leicester early in the sixteenth century, he was shown a remnant of the "bishop's palace," which was then standing near St. Margaret's. There is little doubt, however, that the building Leland saw was a portion of the manor-house belonging to the estate known as the "Bishops Fee," which was held by the post-Conquest bishops of Lincoln, and it should be noted that there is no evidence of any pre-Norman grants of land to an episcopal foundation at Leicester. The manorial connection with the later see also explains the Whitsuntide custom of carrying gifts in procession from the various town churches to St. Margaret's, whence they were forwarded to Lincoln. In the *Matriculus* of Hugh Welles St. Margaret's is styled "*prebenda Lincolniensis*," and is accurately described as being "*extra muros*," for throughout the Middle Ages the church and parish were outside the borough.³ This association with the diocese of Lincoln obviously has nothing to do with any Anglo-Saxon bishopric of Leicester, and, as Mr. Hamilton Thompson has pointed out that cathedrals in Roman towns were invariably built within the old Roman area, the Saxon episcopal headquarters must have been one of the churches then existing inside the borough, though where that church was situated cannot now be discovered. St. Nicholas' is the only building in Leicester which retains architectural features of the Saxon period, but some of the mediæval parish churches may stand on the sites of earlier Christian fanes.

Leicester became one of the Five Boroughs of the Danelaw, the territory, north of the Thames and east of Watling Street, assigned to the Danes in 878 by

the Peace of Wedmore. Evidence of this occupation is found in many Leicestershire place-names and in the distinctive mode of assessment for the Danegeld. In the northern Danelaw, of which Leicestershire formed a part, the unit of taxation was the "carucate," which consisted of eight bovates, and (probably) a hundred and twenty acres; in southern England the assessment was by "hides" of four virgates, each virgate being estimated to contain thirty acres. Assessments in the hidated districts were decimal, while in the Danelaw they were duodecimal. This difference clearly distinguishes Leicestershire and the adjoining counties from the rest of England, with the single exception of Yorkshire, and there may have been other effects of Danish influence which have not yet been isolated.⁴

In 918, after taking the town of Derby, King Alfred's daughter, Ethelfleda, captured Leicester, and many of the Danes thereabouts became subject to her rule; shortly afterwards the Danes of York also made peace with her and bound themselves by oath to obedience. This princess, known as "the Lady of the Mercians," is generally credited with having strengthened the *burh* fortifications of Leicester and founded a church on the site of St. Mary's. It would be in the natural order of things that she should see to the defences of the town, but she can hardly have done much more, for she died at her palace at Tamworth on June 12, 918 or 919—the balance of evidence inclines to 918, in the eighth year after the death of her husband, Ethelred, with whom she had jointly ruled over Western Mercia. She is said to have been wise, just and righteous, and to have walked in the ways of her father. During the next century there were innumerable conflicts between the Saxons and the Danes, and in 1013 the Five Boroughs made submission to Sweyn, king of Denmark. Leicester was sacked by Edmund Ironside in 1016, the year of the

decisive battle of Assandun, which made Canute master of all England, except Wessex and western Mercia. "After this event, and until the Norman Conquest, . . . the town of Leicester was free from the assaults and ravages of conflicting armies, and was accordingly well peopled."

¹ That the token was presented by the gladiator would have been more certain if the lady's name had appeared in the dative case: "*Verecundæ Lydiæ*."

² Though a few Roman burials have been noted within the mediæval area, the majority were just outside it. The two principal cemeteries were between Millstone Lane and Welford Place, and outside the mediæval East Gate, near the top of Belgrave Gate. There were also interments north of St. Margaret's church. These facts suggest that, during the greater part of the Roman occupation, the boundaries of the town corresponded with the line of the mediæval walls.

³ The Bishop's Fee, though outside the walls of Leicester, was within the borough agricultural area, and doubtless in early times was under burghal jurisdiction. It appears to have existed as a separate manorial estate before the Conquest, and afterwards, as will be seen, a clear distinction was drawn between the burgesses of Leicester and the bishop's tenants.

⁴ The term *wapentake*, used for *hundred* in the Leicestershire section of the *Domesday Book*, appears to have been due to the local influence of the Danes, and the twenty-four Jurats of Leicester were probably the successors of the Danish *lagemanni*.



INTERIOR OF ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH

CHAPTER III

THE NORMAN EARLS

IT is stated in the Domesday Book that in the reign of Edward the Confessor the city of Leicester was taxed at thirty pounds by tale, every ore of the value of twenty pence, and fifteen quarts of honey; and that when the king went to war by land twelve burgesses went with him, while if he went by sea four horses were sent as far as London to carry such things as were necessary. He also received twenty pounds a year from the mint, which was situated near the North Bridge. The town contained sixty-four burgesses, three hundred and twenty-two houses, and the six parish churches of St. Martin, St. Margaret, St. Nicholas, All Saints, St. Michael and St. Peter, four of which are still centres of parochial life. Strictly speaking, St. Margaret's, being extra-mural and under a separate manorial jurisdiction, in the Middle Ages was not in the borough at all, but in a suburban district since municipalised; St. Michael's fell into disuse in the fifteenth century, and St. Peter's was demolished about a hundred years later, both parishes being absorbed into All Saints'. From the disproportion between the number of houses and the number of burgesses, it has been inferred that there was a great slaughter when the town passed into the hands of the Normans; but, as Mr. Billson points out, only four of the three hundred and twenty-two houses noted in the Domesday Survey are said to have been "waste," or uninhabited, and it should be remembered that there would be many householders who were not burgesses, *i.e.*, holders of burgage tenements. The

total population has been estimated at from sixteen hundred to two thousand persons.

The first Norman overlord was Hugh de Grantmesnil, who was rewarded for his share in the conquest with the honour of Leicester and the sheriffdom of the county, in which he held no fewer than sixty-seven manors. He is also generally said to have received "the barony of Hinckley," with the Stewardship of England, but this appears to be an error. (See Appendix.) Four of the Leicester churches and a great proportion of the houses went with the honour, and the lord was entitled to "the third penny" due from the mint to the king. Other large property-holders in the town and immediate locality were the king himself, his nephew the Earl of Chester, his niece the Countess Judith, and the Bishop of Lincoln. Hugh de Grantmesnil, who had fought at Hastings, was left in charge of Hampshire when William went back to Normandy, and he himself visited that country two years later, to prevent, it is said, his handsome wife, the daughter of Ivo de Beaumont, from getting into mischief. Leicester castle, originally, no doubt, a wooden structure, protected by a rampart and the waters of the Soar, was built by de Grantmesnil, who kept the district in subjection by means of its garrison. This central fortress, with other strongholds in the county, formed part of an organised military system, designed to uphold the king's authority throughout the realm. As governor of Leicester the lord presided at the castle, where a court was held for the settlement of disputes, the receipt of dues, the punishment of malefactors and other legal business. All serious cases were brought before this tribunal, which had power to inflict the death penalty, but in minor matters each tenant was under the jurisdiction of his own manorial lord; for instance, those living under the Bishop of Lincoln had to plead in the bishop's court, which was next in importance to the one held at the

castle. The men of Leicester owed agricultural service to their lord, and were obliged to sow corn on his lands near the borough. In 1088, through joining the rebellion in favour of Prince Robert and committing acts of war in the counties of Leicester and Northampton, Hugh incurred the vengeance of William Rufus, who came to Leicester and did serious damage to the castle. He seems, however, to have been left in possession of his estates. In 1094 he died, a few days after renouncing the world and putting on the habit of a monk, and his body, preserved in salt and wrapped in an ox-skin, was taken to the abbey of St. Evroult, with which he was intimately associated, and was buried there with honour. He was succeeded in his English estates and the sheriffdom of Leicestershire by his son Ivo, who married a daughter of Gilbert of Ghent, Lord of Folkingham and other lands in Lincolnshire.

Ivo de Grantmesnil was a man of whom nothing creditable has been put on record. With his two brothers he joined the first Crusade and incurred dishonour as one of the "rope-dancers . . . who dropt in the night from the walls of Antioch." In 1101, after his return to England, he waged private war upon his neighbours and plundered the town of Leicester. A heavy fine was imposed upon him by the king for these misdemeanours, and to obtain mitigation he sought the aid of Robert de Beaumont, Count of Meulan, who was reputed to be "in worldly affairs the wisest of all men betwixt England and Jerusalem." The count promised to use his influence, on condition that Ivo pledged to him the greater part of his estates for fifteen years and agreed to a marriage between his own son and de Beaumont's niece. The terms were accepted, and Ivo straightway started upon a pilgrimage from which he never returned. The count, ignoring the claims of the legitimate heir, retained his hold upon the estates and founded a line of earls with whom

the fortunes of Leicester were bound up for several generations.

Possession is said to be nine points of the law, and presumably the de Grantmesnils had declined in spirit, but such a policy could only have been carried out by a man of high prestige and great force of character. De Beaumont had both these qualifications; for distinguished service at Hastings large estates in Warwickshire had been granted to him, and he was so "eminent for knowledge, eloquent, keen and crafty," that, according to William of Malmesbury, he was appealed to as "the Oracle of God." By judicious adherence to William Rufus and Henry I. he kept on the side of established authority. That he continued to be styled Count of Meulan, and was never called Earl of Leicester, was probably because the foreign title had the higher significance.

In 1107, for the salvation of his soul, Count Robert built the church of St. Mary de Castro within the castle precincts, and established therein a foundation for seven secular canons. Thus St. Mary's, which later became parochial as well, began as a collegiate chapel belonging to the castle: for no reliance can be placed upon the tradition that a church of some kind, vaguely associated with King Alfred's daughter Ethelfleda, occupied the site before the Conquest. In later years the Norman church was developed to an impressive size, and, through its association with many illustrious persons and a few notable events, attained considerable importance. An alluring problem for architectural students is provided by its complicated plan, and the building, as it now stands, with its tall spire dominating the castle area, is the most gracious local monument of former times now in existence.

During his tenure of the earldom, Robert of Meulan granted to "his merchants of Leicester the gild of their merchants," and the twenty-four chief aldermen, afterwards called Jurats, were established at about

the same time, as is shown by a charter issued from Breteuil by his son, Robert Bossu. The Jurats of 1253, reporting upon the validity of a tax called Gavelpence, give a romantic account of their corporate origin, which they assign to the period of Robert of Meulan. In their report it is stated on oath that in the time of Robert of Meulan two kinsmen waged a trial of battle for a piece of land that was in dispute. When the combatants had fought "from the hour of Prime to the honour of Noon, and longer," and one of them had been driven to the edge of a ditch, his assailant called out: "Mind you don't fall into the ditch behind you." Moved by the man's chivalry, the spectators raised a cheer so loud and prolonged that it reached "the Lord Earl" (*i.e.*, Robert of Meulan, who was not so styled in his own time and whose successor did not inherit Meulan) in his castle. Robert, the report continues, when the incident had been explained to him, ordered that "all pleas touching them should henceforth be treated and determined by the twenty-four Jurats who were appointed in Leicester of old time," conditionally upon his receiving an annual tax of threepence from every gabled house in the high street of the town. In this way, according to the Jurats, were first raised the "pence which are called Gavelpence." The impost, they said, was permanently remitted by the count's son and heir, for the health of his father's soul, and how the quitclaim became inoperative is thus explained in the sequel: "The aforesaid charter, with many other writings and charters, was put in the keeping of a certain burgess and clerk who was called Lambert, against whom evildoers arose in the night, because he was thought to be rich, and they burned his houses and even his feet [*et etiam pedes ipsius*, which Miss Bateson thought might mean the feet of his indentures], together with the charter and many other writings. Some time after, there was a certain clerk

in the town of Leicester by name Simon Maudit [Accursed], who, for some time after the death of the aforesaid Robert Earl of Leicester who made the charter of quitclaim, had the reeveship of Leicester in farm, and collected the said pence called Gavelpence by force and at his own will, distraining all who refused to pay, bidding them show a warranty of quitclaim, for he knew very well that the quitclaim was burnt, and so they are paid to this very day."

That the tax was a reality there is no doubt, and Simon Maudit is the name of a real person, whose son entered the Gild Merchant in 1209; but, in spite of its circumstantial details, the Jurats' story is not convincing. It is not credible that wideawake burgesses would be induced by an unscrupulous clerk to pay an obsolete tax simply because they were unable to show a warranty of quitclaim, and it is in the last degree improbable that "Gavelpence" (*gouel peniis*) had anything to do with gables; it is much more likely to be derived from the A.S. *gafol*, which appears in the word "gavelkind," and means "tribute." Nothing is said of the means by which the Jurats got together the evidence for the picturesque narrative, but it is perfectly well known that inquests by jury became general in the time of Henry I.

The same Jurats, having enquired into the origin of another tax called Pontage or Bridgesilver, found that "in the time of the same Earl Robert," when "the forest of Leicester was so great, wide and full that it was scarcely possible to go by the paths of that forest," the townsmen were allowed to bring away dead wood, at the rate of "six cart-loads for 1d. and a horse-load a week for ½d. and a man's load for ¼d." These sums were collected first at the exit from the wood, then at a point nearer the town, and finally at the Leicester bridges, where one Penkrich had an office on land granted by the earl. "This same Penkrich for some time after collected the said moneys both for

green wood and felled wood which used to be paid for dead wood, and so afterwards it passed into a custom." Strangers who brought wood from the forest of Arden, Cannock Chase or other places had never been called upon to pay pontage, "but those only excepted who came from Leicester forest."

These inquests were held before Peter Roger's son, mayor, "on the Monday next after the feast of St. Gregory, in the 37th year of the reign of King Henry, son of King John." Whatever was thought of the Jurats' findings, the practical result of the enquiry was that the taxes of Bridgesilver and Gavelpence were remitted by Simon de Montfort, in return for an annual payment by the burgesses. The charter of quitclaim, after declaring that neither Simon nor his heirs should "take or exact henceforth from our burgesses of Leicester or their heirs or successors, or from any others from whatever place they may be, anything under the name of the said moneys which were called Bridgesilver and Gavelpence," continues: "neither may the said burgesses or their heirs or successors take or exact in any way anything from anyone under the name of Bridgesilver or Gavelpence."

Robert of Meulan is credited with having so enlarged and improved the castle as to increase its efficiency as a fortress and its convenience as a residence. He is also thought to have built the West Bridge, over the Soar, which, after being reconstructed towards the end of the thirteenth century, survived until 1841. On this bridge stood a small chapel, dedicated to Our Lady, which was maintained from the funds of St. Mary's de Castro. Henry of Huntingdon says that the count's last years were embittered by the infidelity of his young wife, daughter of Hugh de Vermandois, with the Earl of Surrey, whom she afterwards married. The same chronicler states that, when urged on his deathbed to avoid damnation by restoring the lands he had wrongfully acquired, the

grasping old nobleman said : " I will rather give all to my sons, and they shall do works of mercy for the health of my soul." He died in June, 1118, and was buried in the chapter-house of Preaux abbey. In the early part of his lordship, when the Pope issued a decree to enforce clerical celibacy, the priests of Leicester are said to have declared that " they would part with anything but their wives in obedience to the Church."

Count Robert was followed by his son, Robert le Bossu, the first Norman to be styled Earl of Leicester, whose wife, Amicia, daughter of the Earl of Norfolk, brought him the fief of Breteuil. In his youth le Bossu, who was closely associated with the royal household, showed remarkable theological learning, and he was present at the king's death in 1135. After the coronation of Henry II., whom he had liberally supported in 1153, he was made Justiciar, and on two occasions he was left in vice-regal charge of the kingdom. His most memorable act in Leicester was the founding of the abbey of St. Mary de Pratis, for Austin canons regular, beyond the river on the north side of the town. On this he bestowed rich endowments, including those given by his father to the college of St. Mary de Castro, and in 1143 the building was consecrated by the Bishop of Lincoln. The brethren devoted themselves to pious exercises and good works, cultivated their lands and gardens, and saw to the entertainment of guests, many of whom were persons of high standing. Those who practised physic cared for the sick of Leicester as well as for their ailing brothers, while those who were scholars helped to promote education. As a community they did not neglect their own comfort and amusement, for there is no sound reason why good men should not try to be cheerful, though the laxity of the community's later days, as revealed at Bishop Alnwick's visitation, cannot be defended.

The monastic church, in which the fallen Wolsey was buried, was noted for its splendour and architectural beauty. The chapel of St. Augustine and the altars of St. Augustine and St. John the Baptist were on the south side; other important features were the high altar of the Virgin, the altars of the Trinity, St. Gabriel, St. Michael, St. Stephen, St. Leonard, St. Andrew, St. Katherine and St. Anne, and a portable altar sanctioned by papal indulgence. At the dissolution the "household stuffe and ornaments of the church" were sold for £228, the lead was valued at £1,000, the bells at £88, and the plate weighed one hundred and ninety pounds. Among the more remarkable members of the community were Henry of Knighton, whose fourteenth-century chronicle is a valuable source of local history; Philip of Repyngdon, the temporary Wycliffite, who eventually rose to high position in the Church; William Charyte, a fifteenth-century prior, who compiled a rentale of the abbey's possessions; and John Penny, a native of Leicester, who was abbot in 1496 and "made the new bricke works . . . and much of the bricke walls," on which his initials still figure in an ornamental pattern of bricks which contrast in colour with those forming the background. Abbot Penny, who became Bishop of Carlisle, died at Leicester in 1520; his tomb, with alabaster effigy, is now in St. Margaret's church, towards the rebuilding of which he was a generous contributor. The most popular of all the abbots was William of Clowne, who rebuilt the Abbey gates and was praised by Knighton as a man affable and courteous to all classes and one to whom no request could be denied. At the opposite pole was William of Saddington, who was censured at the visitation of Bishop Alnwick in 1440, for "observing a damnable superstition," an attempt at divination by black magic, at Ingarsby, and for the habitual unpleasantness of his social demeanour. After the dissolution the

abbey property was given to a brother of Katherine Parr; it subsequently passed to the Earl of Huntingdon, and then to the Cavendish family. The surviving gateway of the post-Reformation mansion is thought by Mr. Hamilton Thompson to occupy the position of the original entrance and to be built of the old materials. Robert le Bossu, who also founded religious houses at Garendon and Nuneaton, and died in 1168, is said to have spent the last fifteen years of his life as a canon in Leicester Abbey; this legend, however, is incompatible with its hero's known public activity in the service of Henry II., which occupied most of the time between 1153 and 1168.

Le Bossu was succeeded by his son, Robert Blanchesmains, who married Petronilla (Pernelle), heiress of the Grantmesnils. By joining the rebellion in favour of Prince Henry, the new earl brought grievous calamity upon the town of Leicester, which in July, 1173, after a siege of three weeks, was taken and laid waste by his father's old colleague, Richard de Lucy. So great was the havoc wrought by fire and the engines of war that many of the inhabitants, having paid three hundred pounds of silver for permission to leave the town, took refuge at St. Albans and St. Edmundsbury. The district about St. Michael's church was treated so severely that "the houses were never afterwards rebuilt; the streets became lanes, and the sites of the buildings were in time converted into orchards." In the course of years the inhabitants began to return and the population was recruited from other places, but for a long period the town must have been a sad spectacle of desolation. Three months after the siege the earl landed in Suffolk with a Norman army, which was promptly defeated by Humphrey de Bohun. He and his countess, who was captured with him, were sent to Falaise, whence they were brought back to England in the following July. Meanwhile Anquetil de Mallory, Blanchess-

mains' castellan, had broken forth from Leicester castle, which had survived the sack, and ravaged the surrounding country. At the end of July the king enforced the surrender of the castles at Leicester, Groby and Mountsorrel, and the earl and countess were redispached to Normandy. Two months later they were set free again, and in the following January Blanchesmains was pardoned and all his castles, except Mountsorrel, were restored to him. On the accession of Richard I. he was fully reinstated; he died in Greece in 1190, as he was returning from a pilgrimage to Palestine. Henry of Knighton states that the Countess Pernelle, who built the nave of the abbey church, caused a rope to be made of her own hair, by which a lamp was suspended in the choir. Blanchesmains' youngest son, William the Leper, is said by Knighton to have founded the Hospital of St. Leonard, for persons afflicted with the terrible disease of which he himself was a victim, near St. Leonard's church, and he is believed also to have established another lazaret-house, dedicated to St. Edmund, on the Belgrave Road, near the chapel of St. John, with which it was associated. This charity was succeeded by an institution for six poor persons, called the Cock Muck Hill Almshouses, which was afterwards rebuilt in St. Margaret's Lane, the present Abbey Street. The last of the de Beaumonts in the male line was Robert FitzParnel, who impoverished himself by participating in the foreign wars of Richard I., and died without issue in 1204, when the earldom passed to the descendants of his sister Amicia. During his tenure there was held in Leicester a meeting of barons, who declared their unwillingness to attend King John on his campaigns in France. This assembly, which took place in 1201, was undoubtedly the first open step towards Magna Carta, and in consequence Leicester is sometimes described as "the birthplace of popular liberty." This phrase sounds well enough in

perorations, but is scarcely accurate; for the aim of Magna Carta was to secure the liberties (privileges) of the barons, not of the common people, and those of its provisions which are not reactionary are less democratic than they superficially appear to be. Fitz-Parnel's most permanent legacy to Leicester was the device (*gules*, a cinquefoil *ermine*), which, together with a wyvern, the crest of the fourteenth-century Thomas of Lancaster, forms the city coat-of-arms.

CHAPTER IV

SIMON DE MONTFORT

AT the death of Robert FitzParnel the de Beaumont inheritance was divided between his two sisters, Amicia, widow of Simon de Montfort, whose ancestor had owned a small castle on "a strong mount" between Paris and Chartres, and Margaret, wife of Saer de Quincy, Earl of Winchester. In the apportionment of the estates the earldom and stewardship went to Count Simon de Montfort, the eldest surviving son of Amicia, while Margaret's share passed to Saer de Quincy and the heirs of that line.

Count Simon, who already had great possessions in France, including the Norman heritage of the de Beaumonts, was recognised as Earl of Leicester, but does not appear ever to have fully established himself. His English estates having been twice confiscated in 1207, he severed his connection with this country, though in 1210 there was rumour of a conspiracy to place him on the throne. He commanded the French forces against the Albigensian heretics, and by his ruthless conquest of southern France secured the special favour of the Pope, who in 1213 insisted on the restoration of his English rights. King John so far complied with the papal injunction as to give the honour of Leicester into the keeping of the Earl of Chester, "for the benefit of the said Simon," and the estates were in Chester's hands in 1218, when the count was killed at Toulouse. After several changes of custody, they were in 1220 again placed in charge of the Earl of Chester, upon whom and his heirs they

were actually settled in fee by Henry III. Amaury de Montfort, the count's eldest son, protested against being thus excluded from his natural rights, but without avail. He thereupon agreed with his only surviving brother, Simon, who had offended the queen regent and wished to leave France for a time, to exchange his English claim for Simon's share in the French patrimony.

It was therefore as a needy adventurer of twenty-one that the illustrious Simon de Montfort came to England in 1229, and, armed with a letter from his brother, supplicated the King to restore his father's lands. "But he answered that he could not do so, because he had given them to the Earl of Chester and his heirs by a charter. So I returned without finding grace." Henry, however, made him an offer of military employment and a pension of four hundred marks a year, which, after consideration, was accepted. In 1230, to quote Simon again, "the King crossed into Brittany, and the Earl of Chester with him; and I went to the Earl, and begged him to help me to get back my heritage. He consented, and next August took me with him to England, and besought the King to receive my homage for my patrimony, to which, as he said, I had more right than he;¹ and he quit-claimed to the King all that the King had given him therein; and the King received my homage and gave me back my lands." In August, 1231, Simon was given seisin of the properties, and his hereditary right was acknowledged.

But, as stated above, a portion of the Leicester estates had devolved upon Saer de Quincy, through his wife Margaret, and in 1236 we find Simon, who had acted as High Steward at the Queen's coronation, complaining that his resources are inadequate for the proper maintenance of an earl's dignity. Not only had a large share of the property gone to the Countess of Winchester, but what remained had suffered

“destruction of wood and other great damages done by divers people to whom the King had given it in charge.” As partial compensation, Henry granted to “our trusty and well-beloved Simon de Montfort . . . [the right to] keep in his own hands or bestow at his will any escheats of lands held by Normans of his fee in England, which may hereafter fall in, until our lands of England and Normandy shall be one again.”

At this period Simon conceived the idea of improving his fortunes by matrimony, and with that end in view laid amorous siege to two wealthy middle-aged widows, the Countess of Boulogne and the Countess of Flanders. These projects were in turn frustrated by the French king, who considered them politically dangerous. Fate had decreed for him a more august marital destiny. During his residence in England Simon had gained the confidence of Henry III., to whose sister Eleanor, the Earl of Pembroke's widow, he was in January, 1238, privately married at Winchester, the King himself giving away the bride. This furtive union, which greatly offended the nobility when it became known to them, might have led to serious consequences, had not de Montfort “humbled himself to Earl Richard [of Cornwall], and by means of many intercessors and certain gifts obtained from him the kiss of peace.” The marriage was also a breach of ecclesiastical discipline; for Eleanor, on the death of her first husband in 1231, when she was only sixteen, had taken a vow of perpetual widowhood. To get over this difficulty Simon made a journey to Rome, and in the following May procured a dispensation from the Pope. Then, after helping the Emperor Frederic II. at the siege of Brescia, he returned to England in October, and on February 2, 1239, was ceremoniously invested in the earldom of Leicester. Later, when he and the king quarrelled, Henry had the effrontery to assert that his sole reason for consenting to the marriage was to conceal his sister's shame.

This was a particularly mean calumny; for though opinions differ about the earl's political motives, there is every reason to believe that his domestic life was above reproach. The union was probably brought about by Henry himself as part of his policy of attaching the great earldoms to his own family. Simon had a good reception on his return from Rome, and his first child was hailed as a possible heir to the Crown. One of de Montfort's first acts as Earl of Leicester was to remit, for the consideration of fifteen marks of silver, certain local customary payments. FitzParnel, when converting portions of the South Field into demesne land, appears to have exceeded his right by including "a certain pasture which is called Cowhay outside the South Gate" of the town. Presumably the citizens affected made some protest against the earl's high-handed disregard of an old privilege; at any rate FitzParnel granted to the free burgesses, "dwelling within certain bounds," passage through his demesne proper and the right to depasture in the Cowhay "for a certain sum of money in *Gersuma* [*i.e.*, as an honourable gift] beforehand" and three-pence a year for each beast turned out upon the pasture. In 1239 Simon confirmed this grant to the burgesses, "to whom the aforesaid pasturage ought to belong," and, for the additional consideration of a colt worth a hundred shillings, agreed that neither he nor his descendants would any longer claim the pasturage. On the strength of this quitclaim, some historians have declared that the preservation of the Victoria Park, formerly the Leicester Racecourse, as an open space is due to the generosity of Simon de Montfort. Such a contention is, however, manifestly erroneous; for the Cowhay, now covered with workmen's cottages, was between the Ayleston Road and the Soar, while the Victoria Park is in a distant part of the large South Field area, and remained agricultural until comparatively recent years simply because



LEICESTER CASTLE AND ST. MARY'S CHURCH

it was the best part of a mile from the old borough boundary. Its ultimate preservation was due to the public spirit of Mr. John Biggs, a nineteenth-century worthy, whose prosaic statue is a familiar landmark in Welford Place.

In 1255, "at the instance and petition of the burgesses of Leicester, for the common utility and improvement of the state of the same town, which, on account of the feebleness and youthfulness of the heirs, for a long time past has almost fallen into ruin and decay," Simon granted "that all the sons firstborn in lawful wedlock . . . on the father's death shall have and possess the paternal inheritance and dwelling peacefully, and shall henceforth be their fathers' lawful heirs." Such last-born sons as had already inherited estates according to the ancient usage were to remain in possession till they died, and to be then succeeded by their first-born sons. Thus was terminated in Leicester the custom of Borough English, which an eighteenth-century antiquary said "was catched we know not how, and by the name may seem to have been brought in by some whimsical old Angle that meant to cross the world," and was attributed by Sir Henry Maine to "ideas which appear to have once been common to the Romans, to the Welsh and Irish Celts, and to the original observers, whoever they were, of the English custom."² Sir Laurence Gomme, in *Folklore as an Historical Science*, says that it is pretty clear that in European countries the custom originated in the tribal practice of the elder sons going out of the tribal household to found tribal households of their own, thus leaving the youngest to inherit the original homestead. By another charter de Montfort ordained that "no Jew or Jewess in my time, or in the time of any of my heirs to the end of the world, shall inherit or remain, or obtain a residence in Leicester."

In 1248, conditionally upon being allowed to use

a free hand, Simon undertook the government of Gascony, and in about four years succeeded in reducing an exceptionally turbulent people to order. During the course of this enterprise charges of undue violence were brought against him; some of the allegations he denied, but he justified certain acts of severity on the ground that, with people like the Gascons, half-measures would have been useless. In the end he was acquitted. When, however, he reported that his task was accomplished, and asked to be indemnified for costs defrayed out of his own purse, a dispute arose, and he relinquished the governorship. Subsequently there was an open quarrel with the king, and Simon became leader of the opposition which papal extortion and the influx of foreign dependents had called into being.

In the struggle that followed Simon left his original associates, and showed the completeness of his naturalisation by placing himself at the head of a central party, whose policy has been summed up in the phrase: "England for the English." He was the leading spirit of the opposition barons, who in 1258 helped to draw up the Provisions of Oxford, which limited the king's misapplied autocracy and so alarmed the foreign parasites that most of them left the country in great haste. The Oxford settlement was of longer duration than might have been expected; but in 1263 the conflict was renewed with increased animus, and, after much dissension and changing of sides, marked by various military episodes and the futile arbitration of Louis IX., the royalists were defeated by Simon at Lewes in May, 1264. In the previous month the king had occupied Leicester on his way from Northampton, where young Simon de Montfort had been taken prisoner. At Lewes the king and Prince Edward were captured, and, on the day after the battle, Henry accepted the Mise of Lewes and promised to abide by the Provisions of Oxford.

Then, as a fresh expedient, Simon, with the Bishop of Chichester and Gilbert of Gloucester, nominated a council of nine, who were to rule under the supervision of their three electors. It was inevitable that this arrangement should provoke jealousy and suspicion, for its practical effect was to make the foreign-bred Earl of Leicester dictator of England.

In January, 1265, de Montfort called together his famous Parliament, to which, for the first time, were summoned burgesses from the cities and towns. This inclusion of plain citizens was primarily a device to gain immediate support, and those who see in it a conscious step in the direction of representative government, as we now understand the term, are lacking in historical perspective. Simon was a warrior of the heroic type, who had inherited an unusual capacity for vigorous action, and, being sound at heart, he perceived that the surest foundation for his own prosperity was the good estate of England as a whole. But he was descended from a line of feudal counts, who had played for "high stakes with very little capital, and had persistently been pushing into power for some centuries," and from the time when he came into the Leicester estates his chief aim had been to consolidate his own position as an English noble of the first rank. As a man of integrity, actively interested in the welfare of all classes, he may justly be called the champion of the people; but to suppose that he believed in the political sagacity of the multitude is to have a false idea of the mediæval conception of life. No man living in the thirteenth century could have the faintest prevision of the social and political aspirations of modern times. What Simon really desired was that, in the general interest, the king should be controlled by an oligarchy of patriotic barons, and, with this end in view, he called to Parliament a limited number of responsible citizens likely to be in favour of this policy. Events proved that he was insufficiently

endowed with the gifts of an administrator, and as a matter of fact the new Parliament was by no means a conspicuous success.

Differences which had arisen between the barons were brought to a head by the indiscretions of de Montfort's sons, who offended the Earl of Gloucester and his adherent kinsmen. The climax came when Prince Edward escaped from Hereford, where he was in honourable custody, and with Gloucester led an army against Simon, the remnant of whose forces was defeated at Evesham on August 4, 1265. The earl fought bravely to the last, and with him died his son Henry and many of his closest personal friends. In accordance with the barbarous custom of the times, his head was sent as a trophy to the wife of Roger Mortimer, the mutilated body being buried in the Grey Friars at Evesham. Hostilities were not immediately ended by the king's victory; but all was quiet in 1267, and the state of the country so settled that Prince Edward, with a large company of barons, set sail for the Holy Land, where he heard of his father's death in 1272.

Two months after her husband fell at Evesham the Countess Eleanor fled, with a large sum of money, from Dover to France, where she found a refuge in the convent at Montargis. Henry refused to be reconciled, but allowed his sister a pension of five hundred pounds, her former income from the revenues of the Marshalls. After nine peaceful years with the sisters of Montargis she died in 1274 at the age of sixty. Simon the younger held out for a time at Kenilworth, but was at last forced to surrender. He escaped to the Continent, and in 1271 was concerned with his brother Guy in the murder of Henry of Cornwall at Viterbo. Eleanor de Montfort (the earl's daughter), who married Llewellyn, Prince of Wales, shortly before her husband's tragic death in 1283 died in giving birth to a daughter named Gwellian. This

child, by the king's order, was well cared for, but not permitted to marry. She grew up to be a nun in the convent at Sempringham, where she died in 1337. With the demise of this sequestered lady the family became extinct. Though Simon de Montfort's career ended in personal disaster, and his progeny died out of the land, many of his ideals were embodied in the policy of Edward I., under whom the English people received "their national livery and the seisin of their inheritance."

The popular veneration in which Simon was held is attested by a large number of miraculous stories, many of which have no more significance than the fable of the Countess of Gloucester's palfrey, which recovered from its broken-windedness through drinking at the Earl's Well, a spring near Evesham said to have run with blood after the battle. One of them, however, has a grim romantic quality which fixes it in the memory: "It is to be remembered that the hand of Simon," which was sent to the lady who received the head, "that the bearer of it was journeying to a certain church, and, hearing the bell toll for Mass, entered in and prayed; and when the priest stood up to elevate the body of Christ, the hand moved and stood upright, and adored Jesus, as it was wont to do while yet alive."

It was during Simon de Montfort's tenure of the earldom that the friars found their way to Leicester, and he is said to have founded the houses of both the Dominicans and the Franciscans. The church and priory of the brethren of St. Francis, or Grey Friars, stood between St. Martin's church and Friar Lane, where the modern lawyers dispense their wisdom. The main buildings of the monastery were destroyed in the sixteenth century, but part of a brick wall, erected about 1500, which enclosed the garden, may be seen in Peacock Lane, opposite the playground of the old Wyggeston School. The convent of the Dominicans

stood near the North Gate, and was called, from the number of ash trees in its vicinity, "Le Black Frears in le Ashes." The old church of St. Clement, which belonged to the abbey and, through the devastation wrought in 1173, had become too poor to support a chaplain, was appropriated to this fraternity, who rebuilt it and perhaps arranged for the continuance of parochial ministrations.

Other religious buildings of the period were the Austin Friary of St. Katherine, near the West Bridge and between the two channels of the Soar; the convent of the White Friars, somewhere against the North Gate; the house of the Friars of the Penance of Jesus Christ, commonly known as friars of the sack; and the chapel of St. Sepulchre, served by the canons of St. Mary de Castro, which stood near the gallows outside the South Gate. It was usual for the bodies of executed persons to be buried in the graveyard of St. Sepulchre's, and two cases of felons recovering their suspended animation are on record. One of these, a man named Wynkbourn, was so fortunate as to receive a pardon from Edward III., who chanced to be staying at the abbey; the other was promptly rehanged. At this chapel, afterwards known also as St. James's, the View of Frankpledge for the Southern Quarter was held at the end of each year. Other Views took place at the Gildhall and on the Berehill, an area outside the East Gate used as a corn market, where there were a cross, a cage for prisoners, a pillory, a set of stocks, and other adjuncts of mediæval life. Many of Simon's friends were men of high character and scholarly attainments, through whose influence schools were established and interest was aroused in scriptural and legal studies, Greek philosophy and a rudimentary natural science. The earl's own spiritual adviser was Adam de Marisco, the learned Franciscan, and the education of his children was entrusted to Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, who is

believed, on no very definite evidence, to have had some official connection with St. Margaret's, Leicester, before he was raised to the episcopate. The wise bishop and Walter de Cantelupe, another intimate of de Montfort's, did practical good by their homely admonitions against dying intestate, eloping with young women, overlying infants, and other forms of indiscretion and negligence. During the lifetime of these apostles of culture and social rectitude, architecture reached a high stage of simple beauty, unadulterated by extraneous ornament, and sound taste was diffused among all classes of society. Great ladies often attained marvellous skill in embroidery; housewives practised the useful fireside arts; and, seeing that the intention of things was honestly denoted by their form, men took a natural delight in their handicrafts, and every common utensil had an appropriate grace. Dominating all was the Church, with its nobly-designed houses of devotion, its reassuring sacraments, its saintly legends and its charities. The thirteenth century was not without its dissensions, as we have seen, and in some respects was limited and even barbarous; but the average good citizen had a sense of beauty and an habitual consciousness of the mystery behind phenomena which are by no means common to-day.

¹ Simon's account of this episode should be read with caution. It was not like Randolph of Chester to act in such a generous spirit, but Simon had an obvious motive for representing that his claim had been freely acknowledged by so august a person as Chester.

² According to the reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement*, May 24, 1923, of an important book about mediæval Winchester, the comparative study of French and English boroughs has shown that the custom of succession by ultimo-geniture in England is due to the influence of the earliest wave of Celtic invasion.

CHAPTER V

THE LANCASTRIAN EARLS

THE titles and estates of Simon de Montfort were bestowed by Henry III. upon his own younger son, Edmund Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster and Lord of Monmouth. When this prince was a boy of nine a papal offer of the crown of Sicily had been accepted for him by his father, who undertook to find 135,540 marks to defray the cost of the Hohenstauffen war, and Edmund was actually invested by Cardinal Ubaldini in 1255. The demands for money to carry out this scheme, which was eventually cancelled by Urban IV., incensed the barons and had much to do with their taking up arms against the king. After the battle of Evesham Edmund returned from France, where he had been helping his mother to raise an army for the invasion of England, and received as his share of the spoils the earldoms of Leicester and Derby, with the Stewardship, and certain castles in Wales. Soon after his marriage to the Earl of Albe-marle's daughter, who died without issue in 1273, the young earl started on the nugatory crusade from which he derived the nickname of Crouchback, and in 1271 was with his brother at Acre. Two years after his first wife's death, he married Blanche, Countess of Champagne, a grandchild of Louis VIII., and lived for a time in France, where he was styled Count of Champagne. As an English prince he engaged in various military and diplomatic employments without acquiring special distinction, though lordships in the Welsh marches were added to his other estates, in

recognition of his share in the defeat of Llewellyn. Dying in 1296 at Bayonne, whither he had retired from a campaign in Gascony which broke down through lack of funds, he was brought home and buried at Westminster, in a tomb which is next to that of Edward I. His connection with Leicester was very slight; but an important charter amending the rules of the Portmoot was obtained through his influence, and it was during his tenure of the earldom that Robert of Sharnford and Ralph the Norman were elected, in 1295, as the first representatives of the borough in Parliament. He is remembered locally as having first ordered the hall of the castle to be used as a court of assize.

Edmund Crouchback, whose cheerful and religious disposition is said to have made him popular, was succeeded by his eldest son, the notorious Thomas of Lancaster, who in 1313 kept up such state at Leicester that £7,359 13s. 0 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. was spent during the year upon household maintenance. In 1305 he entertained Edward I., who granted a June fair to the inhabitants; Queen Isabella paid a visit in 1309; and Edward II. halted at the castle in 1310 and 1311, on his way to and from Scotland. The scale of living implied by the sum mentioned may be gauged by reference to the details of contemporary expenditure noted in the mayor's account. Under May, 1314, occurs the entry: "In 3 men digging sand in the pit and for filling the cart during one day, 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., in ale for them $\frac{1}{2}$ d." In connection with the rebuilding of the High Cross, which stood at the intersection of the two main streets, in the same year, for "going into the neighbourhood of Banbury for John the Mason," Will. Steyn was paid sixpence, and elevenpence was the remuneration given to "a certain mason staying and making the nodes and vanes of the cross after Master John's departure."

Through his aptitude for provoking civil war,

Thomas of Lancaster, a sort of pinchbeck Simon de Montfort, kept the country in a state of turmoil during the greater part of his career. When his quarrels had brought things to an almost unbearable pass, the king and queen, with all the principal nobles and two Cardinal Legates from Rome, held a meeting at Leicester castle in the hope of arranging a settlement. The deliberations of these personages had an apparently successful issue, and the company proceeded to Cotes Bridge, near Loughborough, where they exchanged salutations with the earl, who rode at the head of eighteen thousand men-at-arms. But it was not in Thomas's nature to observe a compact; he very soon broke loose again, and in 1322 was defeated and captured at Boroughbridge. He was thence taken to his own castle at Pontefract, tried in a perfunctory manner for rebellion and conspiracy with the Scots, and decapitated with ignominious circumstance on a neighbouring hill. In spite of his unamiable character, he was posthumously regarded as a martyred saint, and the air was filled with stories of the miracles wrought at his Pontefract tomb and before his effigy in St. Paul's. His final rebellion placed the inhabitants of Leicester in a quandary, and when Sir William Trussel was sent to raise men, ostensibly for service against the Scots, he had to report that the citizens did not bear the earl goodwill. While the burgesses temporised and sent scouts in all directions to see which way the wind was blowing, a detachment of the king's soldiers entered the town, which was immediately placed under martial law. In view of the frequent brawls and murders which at that time disgraced the streets, such a precaution was thoroughly justified; but, unfortunately, the soldiers increased the disorder by their uproarious carousing in taverns, and even Trussel, who should have set an example, ordered the mayor and some of the chief burgesses to attend him with flagons of wine at

the castle. It is clear that the earl's adherents were bent upon drowning in liquor their apprehensions of coming disaster. In the end the townsmen sided with the king, and they were doubtless much relieved by the news which came from Pontefract.

The successor of Thomas, whose domestic life had been scandalous and unproductive, was Henry of Grosmont, so called from the place of his birth near Monmouth, Crouchback's second son, who in 1314 recovered the inheritance and was made Earl of Lancaster and Leicester, and High Steward of England. Though not implicated in the late rebellion, Henry deeply resented his brother's humiliation and encouraged the vulgar reverence for his memory. By assuming the arms of Thomas, for whose soul he erected a cross outside Leicester, and by other manifestations of defiance, he provoked the hostility of Edward II., who made futile attempts to convict him of treason. In 1326 he allied himself with Queen Isabella against the Despensers, and he took a prominent part in the deposition of the king, who remained for some time in his custody at Kenilworth. When Edward III. came to the throne, Henry, as foremost man in the kingdom, was by common consent appointed guardian; but he was denied access to his royal ward by Roger Mortimer, the queen's paramour, with whom he was thus brought into active collision. Mortimer's soldiers descended upon Leicester, and after committing acts of pillage and destruction in its vicinity, proceeded to Bedford, where they were awaited by Henry and the partisans of his deceased brother. Through the desertion of the Earls of Kent and Norfolk, the earl was obliged to submit, and was ordered to pay a fine of eleven thousand pounds, which, however, was never exacted. Eventually he regained his ascendancy, and Edward was roused to action against Mortimer, who was torn

from the queen's side at Nottingham in October, 1330, and within a month was hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. The king's eyes appear to have been opened by the death of the Earl of Kent, who was beheaded at the instigation of Mortimer. Sixteen days after that event Henry was empowered to build a hospital at Leicester, and in December he and his companions received formal pardon for their excursion to Bedford.

Though not more than fifty when he reached this tranquil stage in a life of unusual perturbation, the earl was prematurely aged by sorrow and his sight was beginning to fail. In these circumstances he retired to Leicester and set about the good work which is his chief local monument. In accordance with the letters patent granted by Edward III., he completed the foundation of a hospital, on a site adjoining the castle enclosure, in honour of God and the Blessed Virgin, for the maintenance of fifty aged and infirm persons, with five women as nurses, and a warden, four chaplains and two clerks. The endowment of the hospital, which was built in 1331, included four carucates of land at Leicester and the advowson of the church at Irchester, Northamptonshire. A chapel and accommodation for the clergy were provided, and subsequently the advowson of Duffield church, Derbyshire, was added to the original endowment. The buildings were known as the *New Work* of Earl Henry, and the area in which they stood continues to be called *The Newarke*.

The earl formulated a set of rules and defined his intentions with the utmost precision. Twenty of the beneficiaries were to be permanent residents, and the remaining thirty to be persons suffering from temporary ailments. There was an almshouse for the incurables, with a suitable lodging for the attendant women. The temporary patients occupied beds against the chapel walls, from which they could see the elevation of the

Host in service-time. Each inmate was to receive a penny a day, and the incurables were to be provided with a tunic and hood every Michaelmas; any property left by an inmate was to be absorbed by the institution. When a nurse became incapable another woman was to be appointed in her place, and she was to be cared for, until she succeeded to the next vacancy created by death. The payments from the common fund, excluding expenditure on church services, amounted to £91 3s. 10½d.

The warden and chaplains were to lead a common life, eating together in the frater and sleeping in the dorter; they were to be clothed in a specified garb of sober hue, and to have a comely tonsure, with the hair cut closely over the ears and a wide crown. Vestments for feast-days were prescribed; the services were to follow the regular course of the ecclesiastical year, special honour being paid to the Virgin, while the founder and his kin were to be daily remembered in the office of the dead. As this routine would not fully occupy the time of the chaplains, the earl made statutes for their guidance which, as Mr. Hamilton Thompson puts it, "were founded upon his knowledge of the faults to which religious persons were liable to succumb." They were forbidden to haunt taverns, or to walk abroad without a companion, or at least a serving-man; they were not to be brawlers or provokers to wrath; and the company of women was to be sedulously eschewed. There was to be no perambulation of the town by night, and none might walk through the market or *forum* without reasonable cause or the warden's permission. Any offender against these rules was to be formally admonished, and if, after three such admonitions, he proved incorrigible, expulsion was the penalty. Time justified the earl's precautions; for, though there were decorous men among the chaplains, examples are recorded of unseemly disputes, faults due to inebriety, and too

familiar acquaintance with the wives and daughters of the adjacent laity.

While these designs were being put into effect the earl presided over his household at the castle, which was enlarged and improved to meet the demands of an increasingly luxurious age. On the frequent occasions when illustrious visitors were entertained, the town was enlivened by throngs of attendant strangers and the many diverting strollers who followed in their train. Special events were celebrated by gorgeous military displays, which attracted be vies of light-minded women, whose behaviour did not commend itself to persons of sober temperament. Henry of Knighton says that "wherever there was a tournament there came a great concourse of ladies, of the most costly and beautiful, but not of the best of the kingdom, sometimes forty or fifty in number, as if they were part of the tournament, in diverse and wonderful male apparel, in divided tunics, one part of one colour and one of another, with short caps and bands in the manner of cords wound round the head with gold and silver, and in pouches across their bodies knives called daggers, and thus they proceeded on chosen coursers or other well-groomed horses to the place of tournament, and so expended and devastated their goods and vexed their bodies with scurrilous wantonness, that the rumour of these people sounded everywhere; and thus they neither feared God, nor blushed at the chaste voice of the people."

Customary presents of money and viands to distinguished sojourners, and to the earl when he "came into the parts of Leicester," are items of constant recurrence in the borough accounts. The first visit of Edward III., in December, 1327, cost the taxpayers £7 17s. 6d., which was expended in bread, a tun of wine, two carcasses of beef and five pigs' carcasses, and "four baskets for carrying that bread." A present

to the earl in 1335 came to £6 5s. 1d., and included twelve fat geese and twelve capons, which together cost nine and sixpence. In the same year the "expenses for the King's Marshall and his household coming to Leicester on the Saturday after St. Thomas's Translation," and staying four days, amounted to thirty-two shillings, with a fine of three pounds to the king. When the queen arrived a fortnight later gifts were made to her officers, and "wine [was] given in the presence of Will de Clowne . . . and others coming with the Mayor from the Abbey to attach the Queen's men, doing evil in the town of Leicester." The queen's chamberlain received three-and-fourpence "when he conducted the Lady Queen towards the northern part," and the royal marshall was duly rewarded for telling her Majesty "something good of the community of Leicester." Robert of Scarborough and Roger Hillary, itinerant judges, were regaled with fourteen gallons of wine, Robert of Scarborough being additionally favoured with "2 capons, price 7½d.," a fit lining for the fair round belly of a justice.

The habit of conviviality was a marked feature of mediæval life, and the performance of any public duty by our ancestors was generally rounded off with a feast of generous food and such cordials as have from time immemorial increased the spirit of good-fellowship. Thus in 1339 there was "given to many of the community arrayed and mustered, according to the Statute of Winchester, by the lord's order before the feast of St. Peter in Chains (August 1), drinking in the Saturday Market, by assent, after the muster, 26 gallons of ale 2s. 2d. Given to minstrels piping before them 3d." On the same occasion Sir Edmund Trussel, the earl's steward, and other castle officers were entertained in a manner befitting their position by the mayor. There are many similar records of the earl's chief officials being feasted by the town,

and no doubt these social gatherings made for mutual understanding and encouraged friendliness. In 1346, for example, "John de Frelond Steward of the Honour of Leicester, John Charnels, John Hayward Receiver, Gilbert the Avenor bailiff and all the Jurats and all other honest men of the town" dined with Richard Leverich, the mayor, after his presentation at the earl's court, at the public cost of two pounds.

During the visit of Edward III. in December, 1327, a meeting which the Rev. William Hunt, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, describes as a parliament was held in Leicester. Henry of Knighton says that on this occasion the Crown obtained the grant of a twentieth penny from the temporalities, and a tenth penny from the spiritualities of the clergy, at the instance of Henry, Earl of Lancaster. In answer to an enquiry as to the precise character of this gathering, which took place between the parliament at Lincoln in September, 1327, and the session at York early in 1327-8, Mr. Hamilton Thompson was good enough to write: "I see that letters patent of the Crown (Cal. Patent Rolls, 1327-30) were tested at Leicester from December 2 to December 7, 1327; Edward III. arrived from Nottingham on December 2, and left for Coventry on December 7 or 8, so that this gives the actual date. . . . I would not commit myself to saying it was a parliament, as the measure in question was a matter for Convocation; but, if the clergy actually passed it at Leicester, as Knighton certainly implies, it must have been during a sitting of parliament. He mentions it, however, as an afterthought in connection with the York parliament, so that it is just possible that the demand was decided in council at Leicester and put to Convocation at York." A meeting by adjournment, held in 1349, has usually been regarded as the first parliamentary assembly in the borough.



LEICESTER CASTLE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FRONT AND ROOF OF NORMAN HALL

Earl Henry, who for the last fifteen years of his life enjoyed the confidence of his sovereign and the esteem of all men, died at the castle in 1345. When he was laid to rest in the chapel of the Newarke, the king and queen, with a great company of nobles and ecclesiastics, attended the funeral solemnity.

CHAPTER VI

THE DUKEDOM AND THE CROWN

THE religious-minded founder of the Newarke was followed by his son, Henry, Earl of Derby, a chevalier famous throughout Christendom for his military achievements and his princely comportment. This illustrious paladin, whose spiritual characteristics were those of Chaucer's "parfit gentil knight," was already a person of consequence in Leicester; for in 1343, while fighting against the Moors in Spain, he received £20 3s. from the borough treasury, and on his return, "coming from the Holy Land to Leicester," a further twenty pounds was presented to him by the community. After a few months' hunting in the neighbouring forests, he again went abroad, and was fighting in Gascony at the time of his father's death. In 1350, having gained a series of victories in France, he was made Duke of Lancaster, and, through his friendship with the king, he was one of the first to be invested with the Garter.

The year after his elevation, as he was returning from an expedition against the Lithuanians which did not mature, the duke was arrested in Germany and had to find a ransom of three thousand golden crowns. Immediately on his release he protested against this improper treatment, for which he alleged the Duke of Brunswick was responsible. Brunswick denied the impeachment and challenged his accuser to single combat; but, when the lists had been set up at Paris, the German's courage failed him, and he wished to retire from the contest. Henry was of

different mettle, and, "with a countenance cheerful and debonnair," insisted on proceeding. In the end an apology was tendered through the king of France, and the opponents were reconciled. During his stay in France, Lancaster was offered many valuable presents by his royal host, but all he would accept was a single thorn, said to be from the crown of Jesus, which was afterwards enshrined at Leicester in a manner befitting its extreme sanctity.

Presumably under the inspiration of this venerated gift, the duke, on his return to England, made plans to enlarge his father's hospital and to increase the dignity of the ecclesiastical foundation in the Newarke. In December, 1353, he obtained a bull for the erection of the hospital into a college for a dean and canons, and in the following October made assignation for the maintenance of a dean, twelve canons, thirteen vicars, six choristers, three clerks, a hundred poor men and women, and ten women "to be keepers and washers of the same." For the worthy enshrinement of the Holy Thorn, he built, near the hospital and in honour of the Annunciation, a small but "exceeding fair" church, which was known as the Collegiate Church of St. Mary in the Newarke, and became a famous resort of pilgrims from near and far.

On March 24, 1355-6, the Eve of the Annunciation, the dean and canons were solemnly admitted by Bishop Gynewell, one of the witnesses to the charter being William of Clowne, the beneficent and genial abbot, whom Knighton extolled as "the most notable and distinguished of all the lords of the realm in hunting the hare." The endowment was increased to £309 2s. 9d., at the lowest computation, and secured on manors and advowsons held by the duke, who provided in his will for the completion of the church and college. Several members of the Lancastrian family were buried in the church, and the college steadily increased in importance until its dissolution

in the sixteenth century. By that time six chantries—including one founded by John of Gaunt, another by Simon Symeon, and a third by Dame Mary Harvey, nurse to Henry V.—had been established in the church, and there were five chantry-houses, two of which remain *in situ*. One of these is now the vicarage of St. Mary's de Castro; the other, built by William Wigston, the rich wool merchant who founded a chantry for two priests in 1512, has, since the Reformation, been occupied by a long succession of private tenants. Adjoining it are two seventeenth-century houses, originally the mansion of the Skefingtons, which stand on the foundations of the prebendal house of William Wigston's brother Thomas, who was a canon of the college. A few years ago, when these three houses were threatened by the encroachment of industry, ten local gentlemen opened a subscription-list, which they headed with handsome personal donations. A sufficient sum was obtained to save the property; but a large debt still remains upon it, and until this has been discharged the promoters' intention of conveying these reminiscent buildings to the city cannot be put into effect. As the houses would make an admirable historical museum, and their gardens a pleasant refuge from the clamour of the streets, it is to be hoped that a scheme so well begun will soon be completed. All classes in Leicester have derived benefit from the enterprise and generosity of William Wigston, and all should do their part towards keeping his memory green.

The old almshouse, now called the Trinity Hospital, was rebuilt in the time of George III., and again about twenty years ago. In Elizabeth's reign the charity was placed under the wardenship of the Earl of Huntingdon, whose successor in 1609 transferred it to the Corporation; thenceforward it was administered by the mayor and four of the "most ancient" aldermen. This arrangement continues, with modifications, and



TRINITY HOSPITAL CHAPEL

every Trinity Sunday, in the afternoon, the mayor, with other members and officers of the Corporation, and the inmates of the Hospital, attends a special service in St. Mary's church. Incorporated in the present building, which is well adapted to its purpose, is the fourteenth-century chapel of the original hospital. Perhaps the most eloquent object in this time-honoured sanctuary is the alabaster tomb, with recumbent effigy of a lady, placed on the north side of the chancel. This monument, which was at one time thought to commemorate Mary de Bohun, may with reasonable probability be assigned to Dame Mary Harvey, mentioned above as the foundress of a chantry in the collegiate church, from which it was doubtless removed at the Reformation. The Early English east window, with its unusual grouping of four lancets, displays a most beautiful scheme of coloured glass, designed and executed by Mr. Christopher Whall, which, with the possible exception of a window by the same artist at Ashby Folville, is the finest example of modern glass-work in Leicestershire. Other details to be noticed are the groupings of seventeenth-century armour on the chancel walls, a quantity of woodwork from the chapel of the old Wigston Hospital, and a small window of plate tracery which was transferred to its present setting from a dismantled house of religion in the county. The main collegiate gateway, which fronts Southgate Street, was erected about the year 1400, and the fortified gateway between the castle yard and the Newarke is of about the same date. It is much to be regretted that the latter, which had a picturesque house above it until about the middle of last century, has been allowed to fall into such scandalous decay. The sole remnant of the wondrous collegiate church consists of two arches of the crypt, in the cellar of a house behind the School of Art, and nothing further survives to remind us of the Newarke's former importance, except a few frag-

ments of the surrounding wall which may be traced in the immediate neighbourhood.

The "good Duke," as he was called, died at Leicester castle in the Lent of 1361. It is believed that he fell a victim to the Black Death, the severity and recurrence of which were no doubt largely due to the crude notions of sanitation which prevailed before people had learned how to guard against the dangers of an aggregated population. Henry of Knighton states that in Leicester three hundred persons died in one parish, four hundred in another, over seven hundred in St. Margaret's, and "so in all the parishes in great multitude." This, however, must be an exaggeration, for the town was meeting heavy expenses in the middle of the fourteenth century, and no falling-off appears in the entries to the Gild Merchant. It is probable that the greatest number of deaths occurred among the poorer sort, who were less cleanly in their persons and surroundings than those of better condition. The borough regulations against the straying of pigs at their unsavoury pleasure, the depositing of filth in the streets, and the washing of clothes and "other corripcion" at the common wells, show how elementary was the hygiene of the period.

The ceremonious splendour of the duke's funeral was in striking contrast with the general squalor which favoured the pestilence. In obedience to his testamentary instructions, after being taken on the third day before interment to the parish church of St. Mary de Castro, "for divine service to be done there with 23 torches," his body was buried in the collegiate church of the Newarke, "on the side of the altar over against the place where our lord and father is buried, whom God assoil!" He ordained that there should be no "parade, as of armed men or horses with trappings or other vain things, but a herse with five wax tapers," each weighing a hundred pounds, and four great lights and a hundred torches, carried by

twenty-five poor men in blue clothes and twenty-five in white, about the body. The king and queen, his "lady dame Isabel" (daughter of Lord Beaumont) and "other great folk of our blood" were to be "warned" of the burial. The common people were to be generously refreshed with food, and special attention was to be given to persons of religion.

About a year before his death the duke obtained a charter altering the date of the September fair to the three days before Michaelmas, Michaelmas Day, and the three days after, and, in consideration of a thousand marks paid by the burgesses, granted privileges relating to markets and fairs which were secured upon his manor of Wrangle in Lincolnshire.

In default of a male heir, the inheritance of the great duke, who "died on Tuesday next before the Eve of the Annunciation," passed to his daughters, Maud, Countess of Hainault, who succeeded to the Leicester estates, and Blanche, the mother of Henry IV. and the heroine of Chaucer's graceful threnody, whose husband, John of Gaunt, in her right became Earl, and subsequently Duke, of Lancaster. At the premature death of Maud, as some said by poison, in April, 1362, Gaunt succeeded to her share of the inheritance and became Earl of Lincoln, Derby and Leicester. It was during the tenure of this great feudal lord that Leicester castle reached the height of its almost regal magnificence. So splendid was the hospitality of those days, that, when the king and queen came to hunt in August, 1390, their attendant courtiers were filled with amazement. This visit was a great occasion in Leicester, and the crowds attracted from adjacent places, added to the throngs of excited townsfolk, almost impeded the royal party in their progress to the forest.

The Duchess Blanche, whose husband was in France during the greater part of their brief union, died of the pestilence in 1369. Two years after this

premature bereavement Gaunt married Constance, daughter and heiress of Pedro the Cruel, on whose Castilian throne he had covetously set his eye. There can have been little sympathy between the duke and his second wife, who has been described as "a pattern of orderly and devout living," for he promptly abandoned her to the society of her Spanish *entourage* and entered upon an open *liaison* with Katherine, the young and alluring widow of Sir Hugh Swynford, of Coleby in Lincolnshire. This peccant lady, whose father (Sir Payne Roet) had come to England in the service of Queen Philippa, was a member of Gaunt's household, in the capacity of governess to his two daughters by Blanche of Lancaster. Notwithstanding the irregularity of her position, Katherine was recognised at Court, as is shown by the provision of robes for her use at the feast of the Garter, and there is abundant evidence of her general popularity. In 1375, when the borough farm was leased to the burgesses, she received a present of wine from the community of Leicester. Two or three years later the mayor paid £3 6s. 8d. for a horse "given to the lady Katherine of Swinford," and £2 os. 6d. "for a pan of iron given to the said Katherine for expediting the business touching the tenement in Stretton," and for executing another commission which, at the instance of "a certain lord," she managed with such happy effect that "the town was pardoned the lending of silver to the King in that year." It is small wonder that the good burgesses were polite to a lady so willing and able to procure them valuable favours, and acquiesced in a situation which they were powerless to alter.

The Duchess Constance died in 1394, at about the same time as Mary de Bohun, the wife of Henry Bolingbroke, and both ladies were buried in the Newarke church. In the year following, the duke married Katherine Swynford, whose four children by



NEWARKE GATEWAY AND SOUTHGATE STREET

him were legitimised under the name of Beaufort, the castle of their birth in Anjou. These deferred nuptials, if, as is almost certain, the wife of Geoffrey Chaucer was Katherine's sister Philippa, turned the poet's old connection with the house of Lancaster into a family relationship. The notion, however, that Geoffrey and his "damoiselle of the Queen's chamber" were married in the church of St. Mary de Castro, resting, as it does, on the baseless fabric of a spurious poem called "Chaucer's Dream," need not engage serious attention. There is more reason for thinking that the walls of St. Mary's may have echoed to the voice of John Wycliffe, who was presented to the Leicestershire rectory of Lutterworth by the Crown, probably at the instance of the duke. It was Wycliffe's value to the cause of anti-clerical politics that recommended him to the patronage and protection of Gaunt, who was less able to appreciate the deeper significance of his teaching than was Henry of Knighton, who considered the Reformer "a doctor most eminent in theology," but defined the general diffusion of his doctrine as "casting evangelical pearls before swine." This criticism was fair to Wycliffe, and the latter part of it was perhaps justified by the unrestrained conduct of local enthusiasts.

Two of the earliest Lollard zealots were William Smith, an inconsiderable ascetic who had been disappointed in love, and a priest called Richard Waytestath, who preached to large congregations at the chapel of St. John in Belgrave Gate, and shocked the orthodox by chopping down a figure of St. Katherine, with the coarse remark that if the image bled it should be worshipped, but if not he would use it as fuel to cook his victuals. Another firebrand was William of Swynderby, a recluse who lived in the woods near the town and denounced the sins of the rich and the vanities of women in the churches of St. Martin and St. Margaret. He further distinguished himself by

delivering orations from an improvised pulpit near the same St. John's chapel, where, after doing penance in the churches associated with his former vituperations, he lived for a season in retirement. His emergence, however, was only a matter of time, and he once more became "a horrible seducer among the people" until he left the town, from which his colleagues had been expelled, and sought another sphere for his vexatious eloquence. The most notable of the local heretics was Philip of Repyngdon, a canon of the abbey, who, failing to secure the duke's countenance, made a discreet reversion to orthodoxy, and ultimately became abbot of Leicester (1393-1404) and a persecutor of his quondam co-religionists.

Of all the voices raised against established opinion, the feeblest and most pitiable was that of an anchoress named Matilda, who, after recanting and submitting to discipline, was permitted to resume her occupation of a hut in the churchyard of old St. Peter's. The means adopted for the correction of aggressive heresy may be exemplified by the case of Roger Dexter, Alice his wife, and William Smith, who, besides doing penance in the principal churches, had to stand in the full and public market, "in their shirts, without any more clothes upon their bodies," holding in their right hands crosses which, reverently kneeling, they were ordered to kiss "in the beginning of the market, in the middle of the market, and in the end of the market."

John of Gaunt died in 1399. Though not admirable in all respects, he appears to have been popular with the Leicester citizens, who derived both profit and entertainment from his frequent residence at the castle. Their readiness to come to his support was manifested in 1381, when the mob which burned the Savoy Palace was reported to be on its way to attack his Leicester stronghold. In response to a proclamation ordered by the mayor, over a thousand men are

said to have mustered on the Gallowtree Hill to meet the expected assault, which happily did not occur. Among other things of value, he bequeathed his "red garment of velvet embroidered with gold suns" to the Newarke church, in which he ordained a chantry for his second wife. In 1412 another chantry was established in the same church by Henry IV., for the spiritual health of his father, John of Gaunt, and of Constance, his stepmother, who was there buried. The Duchess Katherine died at Lincoln in 1403.

Almost simultaneously with his father's death, Bolingbroke, as Henry IV., ascended the throne, and, the earldom being thus merged in the crown, Leicester castle ceased to be a ducal residence. It was, however, occupied by the Court in 1426, when the "Parliament of Bats" was held in the great hall, and the five-year-old Henry VI., with about forty-five other candidates, was admitted to the rank of knighthood in the church of St. Mary de Castro. After the ceremony, "their horses being brought into the church, they mounted and rode out among the populace assembled in the Castle-yard," scattering money as they went. At an earlier Parliament, convened at Leicester in 1414, the Commons assembled in a building called *Le Fermerie*, in all likelihood the old barn belonging to the Grey Friars which was converted into a Methodist chapel about 1750. In this historic tabernacle, which was demolished in 1787, John Wesley preached to large congregations of townspeople. In 1450 Parliament, adjourned from Westminster because of the insalubrity of the air, met at Leicester for the last time, probably in the hall of the castle.

In the Wars of the Roses Leicester, departing from its old allegiance, took the side of the Yorkists, its men-at-arms fighting at Towton under William, Lord Hastings, the friend and adherent of Edward IV. This king, in 1462, in consideration of faithful un-

paid services "against our enemies hostilely raising war against us," granted to the mayor and burgesses an annuity of twenty pounds, which was specially exempted from the later Act of Resumption. In the following year, about the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, widow of Sir John Grey of Groby, he empowered the mayor and four of the discreeter comburgesses, "with one learned in the law to be called for ever the Recorder of Leicester," to act as Justices of the Peace within the borough. Edward, who paid several visits to the town, also granted, in 1473, the charter of a seven days' fair, to commence three days before the feast of St. Philip and St. James. Richard III., who with his consort and suite made a short stay in August, 1483, dated several letters from the castle, and in November, 1484, granted the mayor and burgesses an annuity of twenty pounds, for services rendered and in consideration of the "great ruin and decay" into which the town had fallen.

A few days before the battle of Bosworth, which was fought on Monday, August 22, 1485, Richard arrived in Leicester, and is understood to have taken up his lodging at the Blue Boar, a picturesque inn near the High Cross, which was barbarously demolished in 1838. The Crowland historian tells us that, when final arrangements had been made, "the King, in full state, wearing his crown on his head, accompanied by John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, and Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and other gallant lords, knights and esquires, and an infinite multitude of common folk . . . marched out of Leicester town" by the West Gate and proceeded towards Bosworth. As he crossed the Bow Bridge, an old woman, observing his foot catch against a stone, is said to have prophesied that where the king's heel had struck his head would soon be broken. The decisive issue of the battle is common knowledge. "At last a glorious victory was given from Heaven to

the Earl of Richmond, now sole King, together with the very costly crown which King Richard had previously worn on his head. For in the midst of the fighting, the said King Richard, stricken with many deadly wounds, fell in the field like a high-spirited and most daring prince." Richard's nude body, thrown across the horse of his pursuivant, Blanch Sanglier, was "carried away to Leicester, in a manner not sufficiently consonant with humanity, for a rope was cast about the neck, while the new King, graced with the crown so nobly acquired, went on to Leicester."

Holinshed states that the body was deposited by Sanglier at the "gray Friers church within the Towne and there lay like a miserable spectacle . . . and in the sayde Church he was with no less funerall pompe and solemnitee enterred than he woulde to be done at the buryng of his Nephewes, whom he caused cruelly to be murthered, unnaturally to be quelled." Henry VII. "caused a Tombe to bee made and set up over the place where hee was buried . . . with a picture of alablaster, representing his person." The story goes that, at the dissolution of the monastery, the body was dug up by a sacrilegious mob, dragged through the streets, and pitched over the Bow Bridge into the Soar. Though there are other theories, and nobody knows exactly what happened, this is the tradition which has become fixed in the general imagination, and it is perpetuated by a mural inscription, beside the bridge, which informs passers-by that "near this spot lie the remains of Richard the Third, the last of the Plantagenets." A stone coffin, said to be Richard's, served for many years as a horse-trough in front of the old White Horse inn in Gallowtree Gate.

CHAPTER VII

BOROUGH GOVERNMENT IN THE MIDDLE AGES

THROUGHOUT the mediæval period Leicester was governed by two locally-formed bodies, which were established by charter in the early part of the twelfth century. By the first charter Robert of Meulan bestowed upon his "merchants of Leicester the gild of their merchants with all customs by which they held in the time of King William and of King William his son and now in the time of King Henry." This is the earliest known reference to the Gild Merchant, which for many generations formed an integral part of the borough constitution. The second charter, granted by Robert le Bossu, secured the continuance of the Portmanmoot, or Portmoot, a special borough court of Saxon origin, which was the germ of the later corporation of Leicester. The English version of the document runs: "R. Erle of Leicester to his vndersherif and to all his Justices and ministers of Leicester Frenssh and English Greting. Knowe ye that I to all my Burgesses of Leicester and to all theme that in their Compayne woll hold theme selff Graunt to hold of me frelie and quietlie from all custumes and from all thynges pertenyng to hundred and heriet and that by their paymentes accustomed and also by the increment of viiii li. So that neither by plee neither for eny custume thei goo owt of Leicester but oonlie to the Comnecherchie as of old tyme was accustomed. I graunt also to theme to hold their merchauntes gilde as they euer best held in tyme of my father." The citizens were thus freed, except in

special cases, from the obligation of pleading at the castle, and from the payment of certain customary death duties, for the sum of eight pounds; but the fines and profits of the burghal court were retained by the earl. Perhaps the Portmoot assembled in the open air as a safeguard against magic influences (see Beda, *Hist. Ecclesia*, i. 25); for *Comnecherchie*, a translation of *comnecherchiam*, an abbreviated form of *communecherchiam*, is understood to mean "town church-yard."¹ St. Martin's has for several centuries been recognised as peculiarly the municipal church; but it is possible that in Norman times this distinction belonged to St. Nicholas', near which the first gild-hall was erected, as we shall see presently.

Though in course of time the Portmoot and the Gild Merchant tended to coalesce, they were originally quite distinct from each other, the Portmoot being the more exclusively burghal of the two. The Gild, it should be noted, was conferred upon the *merchants* of Leicester; the Portmoot was granted to the *burgesses* and all who desired to be of their company. The term *burgess* denoted a citizen qualified, by the possession of substantial interests in the borough, to hold municipal office, to serve on juries, etc. He might be, and almost invariably was, a member of the Gild; but it should be clearly understood that all gildsmen were not burgesses. The distinction will be made plain as we proceed.

The Portmoot was administered by twenty-four aldermen, selected from the richer burgesses, called *Jurats*, who were presided over by a chief alderman, afterwards known as the mayor. In early times this important office was occasionally held by two persons in conjunction. About 1225, for example, Simon Curlevache and John Warin were aldermen together; a year or so later Curlevache appears alone as "Alderman of Leicester." With William of St. Lo this wealthy burgess, who for some reason unknown had

to pay a large fine to Simon de Montfort in 1239, held office from 1235 to 1242. In a release of about 1250 "Will of St. Lo and Peter Roger's son, Mayors," head the list of witnesses, while in 1251 Peter Roger's son is described as "then Mayor of Leicester." In 1258 the earl was asked to choose a mayor, and appointed Henry of Ruddington; but the usual method of election at this period is not known. Reeves, or bailiffs, and other paid officials were attached to the court.

The functions of the Portmoot are implied in the wording of the Jurats' oath, which was formally administered in the presence of the mayor and Jurats and the brethren of the Gild. Every novitiate swore to render careful judgment; loyally to assess rich and poor, according to the amount of the trespass; to attend the Portmoot when summoned to do so; to keep the assize of bread, ale and wine with the mayor; and to maintain loyally the franchises of the town. In 1274 it was ordained that "no Jurat might dwell on the fee of the Lord Bishop," an extra-mural easterly suburb under the manorial jurisdiction of the Bishop of Lincoln. The reason for this enactment was that the bishop's tenants, though eligible for membership of the Gild, not being burgesses of the town, lacked the necessary qualification for holding office. This law and a fiscal agreement of 1281, in both of which the same principle is involved, bring out clearly the distinction between the terms *gildsman* and *burgess*, which have often been confused by students of municipal institutions.

The Portmoot, then, was a special court, controlled by the Jurats, for the maintenance of law and order within the borough. At this court, the first barrier between the townsmen and the feudal authority of the earl, justice was dispensed and legal sanction was given in all specifically local matters which demanded juridical attention. The earl could still claim cog-

nisance of actions brought against his tenants-in-chief; but, by a charter of Edmund Crouchback, it was provided that such claims should be entered before the plaintiffs were disputed, and that if a tenant was able to prove, by the oath of twelve "lawful men," that justice had not been done in the castle court, the Portmoot should recover the case, "as was customary heretofore." All fines, in whichever court a case might be held, went to the earl. The Crouchback charter, among other reformatory clauses, also decreed that "whereas it was customary heretofore, when . . . the plaintiff had said his plaint, if the defendant, directly the plea had left the plaintiff's mouth, did not say thwerthutnay [*i.e.*, deny it utterly], he was held to be non-defendant, and that was called Swarless, and he was not allowed to plead nor to ask council nor to have any man that knew the usages to speak for him, whereby many from not knowing the usages lost their suits: For this it is now provided . . . that when the plaintiff shall have pleaded, the defendant shall have reasonable time to answer that he be not taken by surprise."

The Gild Merchant, the Portmoot's complement in the borough constitution, was first of all a commercial and industrial brotherhood, designed for the regulation of trade and the protection of local monopoly. Except at markets and fairs, persons who did not belong to this association were not permitted to do business by retail in the borough, except by paying a prohibitive toll on each separate transaction. Most of the enfranchised brethren were permanent residents in the town, or upon the Bishop's Fee; but strangers who undertook to share the obligations of the fraternity were admitted to membership, though on terms less advantageous than those enjoyed by natives. Whenever there was difficulty in collecting the contributions due from them, these "foreigners" were given the alternative of becoming resident or

forfeiting their gild. The only local traders not on the rolls of the brotherhood were certain *stallati*, a class of salesmen licensed to hold stalls in the earl's market. In Leicester females were not admitted as members; but there were women who engaged in business, under the Gild's supervision, and, for purposes of tallage, were regarded as "*homines Leycestrie*." Not being of the fraternity, these women could not be charged with trespass against its rules, or threatened with expulsion; but when they spoke rudely to the tax-gatherers, an offence to which they were somewhat prone, the custom was to exact the penalty from their unfortunate husbands. How contumacious spinsters were dealt with does not transpire. In 1318, however, contrary to the logic of the position, one Christiana the Mustard-maker was charged in person with having "abused the assessors and vilified them with vilest words in the High Street before the people." Though this lack of proper restraint was considered to be "to the damage of the whole community, Christiana was let off very lightly. She was merely ordered to pledge five pounds, all of which was pardoned except six-and-eightpence, and this was respited until such time as she might forget herself again. The Gild, besides exercising industrial control, was the appointed agency by which money was raised for public requirements. Indeed, the fraternity's privileges were entirely dependent upon its fiscal efficiency, and the brethren knew that if the taxes were not punctually forthcoming their charter would be promptly withdrawn.

In a general way the Gild Merchant resembled the Anglo-Saxon Frith Gilds, the Roman *collegia* and the brotherhoods of ancient Greece; but, though attempts have been made to prove its individual antiquity, trade in England before the Conquest was hardly of sufficient importance to require special bodies for its government. The aptitude for corporate

organisation was perhaps derived from the experience of earlier fraternal societies. The Gild Merchant proper, however, does not seem to have arisen until the strong central government of William I. facilitated the operations of merchants, by making the roads so safe that a man "might go over the kingdom with his bosom full of gold."

The first meeting-place of the Gild, as of the Portmoot, was presumably the "town churchyard"; but the brethren assembled under a roof in the thirteenth century, for in 1258 one shilling was paid to Robert Griffin "for hire of the house to hold the Morningspeeches in." Before the century's end they possessed a hall of their own, near St. Nicholas' church, "at a certain corner, between the land which was Richard the Parmenter's and Henry Shaune's land." On St. Cuthbert's Day, 1274, "Alexander the Mayor rendered account of the Gildhall of £6 9s. 3d.," which represented the total cost. In this hall, which was practically rebuilt in the fourteenth century, the brethren transacted their business and enjoyed their festive banquets for more than two hundred years. In 1334 the assizes were held there, and, for some unknown reason, damage was done to the benches by riotous persons in court. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, when the Portmoot and the Gild Merchant had practically become merged into a single governing body, the town meetings began to be held in the hall of the Corpus Christi Gild, but the older building continued to be used as a store-house for implements of war, and as a place of incarceration. It suffered great damage during the siege of the town, and its final dissolution appears to have occurred early in the eighteenth century.

The admission of members took place at the annual meetings of the whole fraternity, when each new gildsman, unless he succeeded his father or was otherwise privileged, paid certain entrance fees. The fol-

lowing records illustrate the procedure: "Peter the blacksmith is quit of entrance fee, of the hanse, and of the bull." "Simon with the beard has the seat of his father." "Geoffrey, the man of Osmond the Tailor, is quit of entrance fee," as was "*Osmond filius sacerdotis*." The "hanse" was the periodical subscription; the entrance fee for natives who did not inherit was three shillings; strangers were required to pledge twenty shillings and a bull, the bull-payment being commuted to a sum of money, which at the end of the thirteenth century varied from six-and-eightpence to twelve-and-sixpence, according to the price of bulls. It was presumably the youngest son who inherited his father's seat until Simon de Montfort's charter abolished the custom of Borough English. Ecclesiastics not being eligible in Leicester, members were sometimes induced to trade with the money of the abbot and the heads of the various religious houses, an irregularity for which they were from time to time brought before the Gild tribunal.

Every new member had to take "the othe of theym that entre into the Chapman Gilde," which was as follows: "This here you, Mr. Mayor and the brethren of the Gilde, that I trully the custumez of my Gilde shall lawfully holde and my Gilde in all thing sue. I shall lote and scot with my brethren of the Gilde, whethre I dwell in the towns fraunchessez or in the Bishops Fee or any oder place. Also I shall warn my Mayre and the gode folkes of the towne if I knowe eny man that merchandeth within the fraunchessez of this same toun that been able for to entre into the same Gilde, and also I shall be obedient and suenge at my Mayrez commandement and somons and the gode custumez and fraunchessez of this toun to my power I shall maynteyn, as God me help and all seints." Gildsmen living on the Bishop's Fee, not being burgesses of Leicester, were not liable to pay scot "for amerciaments and fines that touch the com-

munity of the town and not the community of the Gild."

The Gild Merchant was originally governed by an alderman, or two aldermen jointly, assisted by twenty-four brethren "elected for the common council of the Gild, to come to all summonses of the Alderman to counsel with him about the town, and to follow him in the affairs of the town as his posse, if they are in the town, under a penalty of 6d." The alderman and brethren, afterwards called the mayor and Jurats, were the leading burgesses who, as we have seen, constituted the borough court. The fact that the Portmoot and the Gild were controlled by the same set of men has caused many historians to regard the two institutions as identical; but the exclusion of the bishop's tenants from Juratship clearly marks the distinction, maintained throughout the Middle Ages, between the "community of the town," represented by the Portmoot, and the "community of the Gild."

The mercantile brotherhood, like the borough court, had its subordinate functionaries. In 1204-5 Robert Brun and Robert Blund are named as the persons to whom entrance fees, etc., were to be paid; in 1210 Richard Pilse and Geoffrey Ordriz are called receivers; and in 1216 Roger de Carleton and Eustace Freebody appear as "chamberlains of the receipts." The records and accounts were kept by the mayor's clerk, and there was a bellman who summoned the members with his instrument, which was bought for sixpence in the Morningspeech, and "transferred to the hands of Adam of Winchester, in the year in which the city of Damietta was taken by the Christians."

As stated above, the chief privilege of membership was the right to sell commodities by retail within the borough. Strangers and non-gildsmen, from whom tolls were levied on all purchases and sales, were compelled to bring their merchandise to a specified public place, that their dealings might be transacted under

official supervision. The brethren enjoyed the rights of pre-emption and a share in all purchases; but there were strict rules against regrating, and gildsmen were forbidden to enter into partnership with non-members, or to share profits in return for money lent. The regulations for preserving monopoly at times became so numerous as to hinder the town's prosperity, and they had occasionally to be relaxed; but the Gild's narrow policy, designed for the brethren's "owne singler profit," tended to reassert itself, and, by driving merchants to such places as Birmingham, which grew up on a free-trade basis, helped to bring about the decay of business so generally lamented in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

On the excellent principle of washing one's dirty linen at home, the Gild maintained a tribunal of its own, before which misdemeanours were normally dealt with in as conciliatory a spirit as was consistent with discipline. Two or three cases will suffice to illustrate its general methods. In 1254 Roger Aldith was convicted for the third time for making a piece of vermilion cloth in a dishonest manner, and was ordered to be "separated from the community of the Gild." The court, however, must have speedily relented, for, four years later, he and Hugh of the Solar were each fined a tun of ale for a mutual assault at Boston Fair. Henry Houhil was another delinquent who experienced notable forbearance. A year after being in trouble for rebellion "in full morning-speech before his mayor," he was "charged that he put black wool into woad to make it blacker, and afterwards added to it perse-coloured cloth." Though he admitted part of the offence and behaved very obstinately, he was "pardoned all by the community of the Gild." In marked contrast with this extreme leniency was the treatment of Margery Dike, a gildsman's daughter, who "was apprehended for wool worth 3d. which she had wrongfully taken; and

because she had abjured the town of Leicester twice over for wrong doings and had the pillory once . . . she was adjudged by the Jurats of Leicester for taking the said wool to have her ear cut off," and was banished for the third time, with the warning that if she returned again she would bring upon herself "the other judgment which is not to be written."

In the mayoralty of Henry of Ruddington it was enacted by the Gild that Leicester merchants who "at the time of Stamford Fair next following shall come to Stamford with cloth or wool or with fells, shall cause this merchandise to be carried to the shops, in which the merchandise of Leicester is usually kept, and there cause the said merchandise to be unloaded and opened in the presence of the neighbours and shall keep the same there (except the fells) for at least a day and a night, and if they should wish to move this merchandise elsewhere, they shall be allowed to carry them well and without hindrance wherever they may wish, and each of them shall give for each cloth 3d. and for each sack of wool 6d. and for a hundred fells 3d. So that if any of them should contravene this in any way he shall fully discharge one shop." Similar rules were made in regard to the fair at Boston.

The thorough-going supervision exercised by the Gild made for discipline and settled conditions, and its insistence on a sound standard of quality and workmanship was wholly commendable. It was inevitable that the advantage of members should sometimes be considered before the general good; but, on the whole, the institution worked well and did a great deal to maintain industrial integrity and a wholesome ideal of commercial responsibility. Of the convivial side of the Leicester fraternity nothing is recorded; but its character may be inferred from the genial habit of the Yarmouth Gild Merchant, which held its annual feast in a hall "richly hanged with cloth of

Arras Tapestry, not sparing any dainty fare which might be had for money. At which feast all private quarrels and emulations were heard and ended, to the glory of God and mutual love among neighbours."

The paramount obligation of the resident brethren was that each, according to his means, should contribute to all the assessments to which the burgesses were liable. By an agreement of 1281, in return for being received into the Gild and enjoying the advantages of membership, "within the town and without," the bishop's tenants agreed to be "in scot and in lot, in all things which belong to the Gild, with the aforesaid Burgesses, according to their assessment." When presents to the value of twenty pounds or less were made to royalty, "at their coming into the parts of Leicester," or to the earl to the value of twenty marks or less, for the purpose of maintaining the Gild's franchises, "the said tenants will pay scot and lot in these gifts and presents according to the proportion which belongs to them by reasonable assessment, made by honest men chosen and sworn for this purpose from both parties." A similar agreement was made in respect of such sums as had to be found when the king's ministers came to essay weights and measures in the town and suburb, and took fine of either by reason of trespasses found, or whenever fines were imposed for derelictions of a more general character. It was the duty of the Gild to provide for the upkeep of the borough, to maintain the roads, bridges and fortifications in satisfactory repair, and to take charge of the public purse.

The method of collecting dues was probably similar to that adopted at Winchester, when the fraternity of that place met to assess the merchants, whose liberality of spirit was encouraged by a round of cheerful potations. "Fit men of good repute were chosen, and distributed in four different houses.

After the business had been transacted, or, as the citizens expressed it, 'after they had drunk the Gild Merchant,' the men chosen to superintend the work in the four houses came together to ascertain how much had been collected. They were to see that each house contributed its share; for if one house was worth more than another, it was to be charged according to its value. The money thus levied was to be handed over to the six collectors of tallage, who were bound to render account twice a year to the civic authorities."

Though the castle was less directly interested in the Gild than in the borough court, the earl's steward, whose friendly assistance was valued by the merchants, occasionally appeared in the Morningspeech, and it was considered expedient to have his signature to important conveyances. Regulations made at the castle were published either in the Morningspeech or the Portmoot, and disobedience to the order forbidding the wholesale purchase of wool by strangers in the neighbouring villages was an offence against the earl as well as the community. The word *gild*, of Anglo-Saxon derivation, denoted a payment to a common fund.

In August, 1375, the lease of the Baileywick was granted to the mayor and burgesses by John of Gaunt, for ten years, at the rent of eighty pounds a year, the estimated value of the profits from the borough courts at that time established. This arrangement, for the term of its duration, freed the Portmoot and the minor courts from the castle interference in details, and so marked a definite advance towards self-government. The earl reserved the rents of his ovens and mills, with certain charges on borough tenements which were levied by the castle porter; retained his right to the escheat of free tenements; and stipulated that the two bailiffs should wear "robes of his livery." The burgesses were to have the guarding of prisoners taken within the town and suburbs, and were em-

powered to build market-booths, the earl providing the necessary timber, which were to become his property when the lease expired.

In 1404 the Baileywick was leased by Henry IV. at the increased rent of ninety pounds, forfeitures of ten pounds or more for a single cause being reserved, and in 1423 Queen Katherine renewed the lease for eighty pounds a year, and half of all forfeitures of five pounds or upwards. That the borough was not in farm in 1393, 1399, 1440, 1442 and 1462 is shown by a record of the lord's receipts, which included rents from shops and shambles, the taxes of cannemoll and walkermoll, perquisites from the local courts, assizes of bread, forfeited chattels, etc. Edward IV., Richard III. and Henry VII. rewarded the town for services rendered by direct payments, not by the reduction of rent usual in the case of towns having the Firma Burgi. As time went on, new enactments limited the sphere of the Portmoot, and reduced its profits, and a renewal of the lease, on anything like the old terms, would have been disadvantageous to the burgesses. When the farm was on lease a fresh bailiff was elected each year by the community; at other times the same man often remained in office for several years. The earl's bailiff was chosen from the Jurats, and thus represented both the castle and the borough. Some of these officers became mayors, and one of them, Peter Curteys, was repeatedly chosen as parliamentary representative and for other burghal positions of trust.

The lease of the Baileywick, by increasing the responsibilities of municipal officers, made the revision of civic administration necessary, and in 1379 it was ordained that the mayor should be "accountable to no one in any way in future," and that he should receive a yearly allowance of "£10 in silver," on condition that he spent forty shillings on his feast, forty shillings on the wages of his serjeant, and twenty

shillings in remunerating his clerk, who was to attend the chamberlains for the time being. The balance was to cover "his remaining charges." The two chamberlains, under mayoral direction, were annually to "repair, maintain and amend the gates, walls, ditches, bridges, pavements, houses and other matters, all and singular, belonging to the town." They were also to collect the rents and dues of the borough and the Gild, and to render account thereof before the mayor and auditors at the end of their year. It was customary for the mayor, after election, to go to the castle, where he swore allegiance to the earl and invited the steward to his civic feast. Later it was ordained "by the Mayor and by all the Jurats and by all the community that whoever shall be Mayor for the year shall not be Mayor in the year next following."

Besides the officers already mentioned there were two borough coroners, elected by the burgesses from their own number, whose duties may be indicated by two extracts from the earliest surviving Coroner's Roll. According to the first entry, dated August 1, 1297, "it chanced that Will Daniel, thief, fled to the church of St. Margaret of Leicester and stayed there for 12 days, and before Laurence le Seller and Will of Lindrick, coroners, he came to peace and was taken to the prison of the Lord the King at Warwick, and there before Hugh of Braunston and his fellow, he put himself upon the country for good or ill and for divers robberies: he was found guilty by the Inquest: therefore he was hanged: he had chattels, to wit one horse for 4s., 1 sword for 1s. 6d., and a short knife for 6d.: wherefor Roger of Glen, clerk and bailiff of Leicester, will answer for the horse and Will of Aston, chaplain of the said church, for the sword and knife." When a suspected person took sanctuary, it became the duty of the four neighbouring vills or wards to prevent his escape and to send for the coroner, who parleyed with the refugee and offered him the alterna-

tive of submitting to trial or of abjuring the realm. "Hugh of Braunston and his fellow" were justices of gaol delivery. Until 1566 Leicestershire and Warwickshire were under the jurisdiction of a single sheriff, and the prisoner was taken to Warwick because Leicester had no county prison before 1309, when one was erected near the Hospital of St. John. The coroners also enquired into the causes of fatal accidents, an example of which occurred on November 16, 1298, about midnight, when "Geof. Curlevache got up mad and raving and drunk and walked to the Soar outside the Northgate in the Fuller's Street [now Soar Lane], by accident he fell into the water and was drowned." The person thus extinguished was probably a relative of the wealthy mayor fined by Simon de Montfort.

During the fifteenth century there were further developments in the borough organisation. In 1464 Edward IV. granted that the "Mayor and four of the discreeter comburgesses . . ., with one learned in the law to be named for ever the Recorder of Leicester," should be Justices of the Peace, exercising within the borough the same powers as the "guardians of our peace and the Justices assigned . . . to hear and determine felonies, trespasses and other misdeeds, and the justices of servants, labourers and artificers have in the county of Leicester outside the town." In 1484, because of the "grete rumour, noyse and sklaunder that rynnnes vpon this town of Leycestre, of divers evel disposed personnes, as well of vacabundes, pety bribours, commyn frayers, and riotours, bawds, evil disposed women of their bodies, commyn skolders, as of broken paiments, stones, tymbre and muk to the grete noysaunce of the Kingis people, to the grete displesour of Almyghty God, and utter distruccion of this said town, without due remedy be had," the borough was divided into twelve wards, each under the control of a resident alderman, selected from the Jurats, who was

empowered to punish disturbers of the peace and those who neglected to keep the pavements before their houses clean and in good condition. Offenders who resisted aldermanic authority were named to the mayor, who exercised summary powers as Justice of the Peace. The original division into quarters, which was retained for the subsidy assessments, had been for defence against external enemies; the new subdivision was for the "very due reformacioun, remedy and correction" of the disorders specified above. Miss Bateson gives lists of auditors, twelve prominent burgesses (three for each quarter), appointed annually from 1477 to 1603. These officers, and the meat, fish, and leather testers, were always "chosen in common halls."

Before the end of the fourteenth century the term "common hall" had come to be applied both to meetings of the governing body and to the building in which they were held, and the Jurats had acquired the title "Brethren of the Mayor" or "Comburgesses." These changes of nomenclature came about through the gradual coalescence of the Portmoot and the Gild Merchant into a single close corporation which eventually had complete control of municipal affairs. When the mayor and brethren took upon themselves to act for the whole community, non-gildsmen began to attend the Morningspeeches, which derived their new name from this circumstance. Through an early delegation of authority, the Jurats had been encouraged to usurp powers formerly exercised by the community of citizens, and though they do not appear to have abused their position, the fact remains that they had become an unrepresentative oligarchy exercising supreme local authority. From their first appearance in public, the commons attended the Common Halls in large numbers at election times and whenever the borough rate was under discussion, and their disorderly behaviour on these occasions pre-

cipitated a crisis. In 1466, when Roger Wigston was mayor, it was ordained that no unfranchised person should presume to enter the Gildhall at any common hall, "on payne of impresonment as long as the Maire lykes forthwith doon vpon euery suche persone doing the contrary." In spite of this order, and a similar one made in the following year, the commons continued to shout at elections, until they drew upon themselves the attention of Parliament.

Early in 1489 the Legislature passed an Act which has been thus summarised: "Great discords having arisen in the towns of Northampton and Leicester and other boroughs corporate among the inhabitants at the election of Mayors and officers, by reason of the multitude of the inhabitants being of little substance and no discretion, who exceed in the assemblies the other approved, discreet and well-disposed persons, and by their confederacies, exclamations and headiness have caused great troubles in the elections and in the assessing of lawful charges, it is ordained by parliament that henceforth the election of officers and assessing of lawful charges in the town of Leicester shall be made in the following way. The Mayor and his brethren, or the more part of them, shall choose 48 of the wiser inhabitants and shall change the 48 or part of them as often as seems necessary. The Mayor and his brethren and the 48, or the more part of them shall yearly elect the Mayors, and this election shall be as valid as if it had been made in the old way. All other officers who have to attend on the Mayor shall be elected by the Mayor and his brethren only, or the more part of them. If the votes are equal the Mayor has a casting vote. Elections made in any other way are void."

Regardless of the fine of ten pounds, half to the king and half towards the borough expenses, to be imposed upon persons who attempted to infringe this Act; of a letter from Henry VII.; and of a borough

ordinance, threatening any of the Twenty-Four who took office "at the eleccion of the comminaltie" with perpetual exclusion from the "nomber and felaship of the xxiiii^{ti}," a Jurat named Towithby allowed himself to be nominated at the next mayoral election, in opposition to the legitimately chosen candidate. Strong feeling was aroused in the town, and, to avoid serious trouble, the retiring mayor, contrary to rule, was invited to remain in office. In the following year the nominee of the Twenty-Four and the Forty-Eight was elected without disturbance.

Looked at in one way, this change of procedure increased the power of the mayor and the Twenty-Four, by giving them the support of forty-eight colleagues whom they could dismiss at will. But it also contained the idea of representation, upon which modern theories of local government are based. The Portmoot and the Gild Merchant, shedding many of their distinctive functions as the years went by, had become merged into a single ruling body, from which the present City Council is directly descended.

¹ Mr. C. J. Billson thinks that *comnecherchia* simply means "common assembly." Meetings in the open, however, had long been customary, and as late as the summer of 1200 the whole community of Ipswich assembled in the churchyard of St. Mary at the Tower, to put into effect the provisions of the charter granted to the town in that year by King John. In October the community met in the church itself, probably because the weather did not favour out-door gatherings.

CHAPTER VIII

THINGS NEW AND OLD

BEFORE we proceed with our chronological narrative, three factors in the life of mediæval Leicester call for brief notice: the religious drama, the social religious fraternities, and the craft gilds, or associations of specific trades, into which the Gild Merchant was by a natural process subdivided.

References to seventeen of these specialised gilds, which in Leicester were called *occupations*, occur in the Borough Records. With the possible exception of the Journeymen Shoemakers, whose Wisbech contemporaries became aggressively violent on the wages question, these societies did not bear the resemblance to modern trade unions that is commonly supposed. They were in fact organised societies of responsible master craftsmen and merchants, whose chief object was to maintain a high standard of production and to preserve the honest reputation of their several industries. As all persons engaged in trade, except women and *stallati*, if they would avoid the tolls which made business unprofitable, were obliged to join the Gild Merchant, the occupations must necessarily have arisen amongst the gildsmen themselves. At their first manifestation the smaller fraternities were severely discouraged by the parent body; but they gradually acquired such a measure of authority that, in aggregation, they eventually superseded the ancient Gild Merchant in the regulation and control of industry. Considerations of space make it impossible to describe their growth in minute detail, but their

general character and their relationship to the Gild Merchant may be inferred from what follows:—

In 1260 the fullers¹ and weavers were sworn to observe certain conditions imposed by the Gild Merchant, and not to hold independent meetings or fix a scale of charges among themselves. In 1275, when certain fullers were amerced for holding a separate morningspeech, the mayor said with feeling that he would not have had "the damage nor the dishonour which they did to the Gild for a cask of ale." Eleven years before this pronouncement from the bench a scale of prices had been fixed for the weavers, who were forbidden to weave the cloth of villages unless they could satisfy two gildsmen of their craft that there was not enough work for them in Leicester. In 1343 the rules "of old appointed" for the fullers, who were to be severely punished if they used instruments of iron in their trade, were renewed by the mayor and community, and two wardens of the craft were appointed to present their shortcomings. About the same period a mercer, accused by six fellow-mercers with selling his wares in Apple Lane, against the ordinance, was forbidden "to stand there any longer exercising his trade, under penalty of forfeiture of his gild." About 1380 two weavers, "Will Martin with the bald head" and Janin French, were adjudged guilty of malpractices and sent to the pillory, and two wardens were appointed to rule their craft. Martin was subsequently reported by the wardens, whom he threatened with assault, and was imprisoned "for the falsity that was found in him, now twice; and at the third default right requires that he shall forswear the town." In 1382 the "lochelmen called watermen" were ordered to serve the commune well and loyally, according to custom, and if any association was found among them, the chamberlains were to levy 3s. 4d. from each

for the first offence, 6s. 8d. for the second 3s. 4d., and so increasing 3s. 4d. at each default until they should submit to the ordinance.

The occupations proved themselves to be an indispensable element in the municipal economy, and in time each possessed its separate book of rules, or ordinal, which was sanctioned by the Gild Merchant. When the old Gild became merged in the governing body, the occupations were placed under the control of the mayor and his brethren, and in 1521 it was ordained that "Mr. Meire and his breder, IIII or V or VIII, shall accepte and prove all ordenalles of all the ocupacions . . . and those customs that be good to alow them and those that be evyll to dame them." In 1562 a regulation was made that no new matter should be included in any ordinal without the sanction of a Common Hall and two Justices of the Peace; by a later statute it became law that all ordinals should be confirmed by the Judges of Assize. Each occupation appears to have had two wardens, and every new member swore to obey his wardens and duly to execute the good rules specified in the ordinal of his craft. By their contributions to the public charges, and in many other ways, the occupations recognised their civic obligations, and a municipal debate of 1477, upon future arrangements for presenting the *Passion Play*, implies that they undertook, as was usual in other towns, the production of the local miracle plays. Like the Gild Merchant, they had their convivial side and held periodical feasts at which the members ate and drank together; they were prominent in all public ceremonies and observances; and they provided for craftsmen and their families the benefits of sick and burial clubs, and of provident societies.

The industrial influence of the occupations was in the main wholesome and beneficial, for they made

a consistent effort to uphold a high standard of efficiency and commercial rectitude. They did not institute the valuable system of apprenticeship, which had been customary long before their day, and for a considerable time after they assumed control it was possible for a man to obtain the right to trade, on the testimony of the gild officials that he was sufficiently skilled to practise his craft. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, it was usual for a definite term of indentured service, with an accredited master, to be insisted upon, and, under the ruling of the craft gilds, this period came to be fixed at seven years. This was the length of time made compulsory by the Elizabethan Statute of Apprentices, which decreed that : " No one shall exercise any craft, mystery, or occupation, now used, or occupied within the realm of England or Wales, except he shall have been brought up therein seven years at the least as an apprentice, nor set any person at work in the same, except an apprentice, or one who, having served as an apprentice, becomes a journeyman, or is hired by the law." As trade expanded, and competition increased, the terms of apprenticeship became more strictly defined, with the object of limiting the number of persons admitted to the freedom of their craft. In many instances the gilds limited the number of apprentices a master might have in his shop, and attempts were made to impose premiums and property qualifications for admission to various trades. Some craftsmen went so far as to extract from their apprentices undertakings not to set up in business for themselves, an abuse which was put a stop to by a statute of Henry VIII., which enacted that : " No master was to compel his apprentice to engage by oath or bond not to open a shop." Apprenticeship involved residence in the master's household, which was no doubt on the whole a good thing, though it had its drawbacks in some cases. The apprentices of London, in

their petition to "the Honourable Court of Parliament," in 1641, complained that, though they were bound to their masters only, "yet of late their mistresses had got the predominancy over them." But, whatever disadvantages and petty tyrannies there may have been in the old order of things, from the time when, through seemingly inevitable causes, it gave way to the new, there has been a steady decline in the quality and tastefulness of almost every kind of article produced by industry.

Similar in their organisation to the occupations were the religious gilds, which arose in Leicester during the fourteenth century, and were established primarily for the maintenance of chantry-priests, who sang masses for the souls of all members and benefactors, living and deceased. They also, like the occupations, provided the advantages of sick and burial clubs, and fostered goodwill by the heart-warming means of convivial regalements. Members who fell into sickness or adversity were visited by the brethren and relieved from a common fund, and each at death was given an orderly and solemn funeral. Every gild had its annual feast, when all assembled to eat and drink in friendship, and ceremonial torches were handed out for use in the following year. On the morrow of the festival there was a general settlement of accounts and subscriptions were paid to the treasurer of the society. When a member died all the brethren and sisters, dressed in livery and carrying their torches, attended the dirge and morrow-mass. The fellowship was limited to persons of good repute, and members of proved delinquency were formally expelled.

The most important religious fraternity in Leicester was the Corpus Christi Gild, which was started in 1343 by four of the earl's chief officers and nine prominent burgesses, including Geoffrey of Kent, the mayor. By 1349 seven others of the Jurat class had joined the fellowship, which in 1400 consisted of two

wardens and about fifty members, and was in a fair way of becoming, on its social side, the fashionable club of the town. In 1365 the meetings were being held in a room over the East Gate; but eventually the fraternity possessed its own Gildhall, the building on the west of St. Martin's graveyard now called the Old Town Hall, which from 1495 was also used for the meetings of the governing body. In course of time the gild amassed property which yielded an income greater than that of the town itself, and, to save the cost of mortmain licences, this was held in trust by leading gildsmen, the deeds being kept with the borough muniments.

The annual procession of the fraternity on Corpus Christi Day, when the Host was paraded through the streets, became an event of civic importance, in which the mayor and other local magnates were conspicuous figures. Indeed, through the founders, in whose "company" vacancies were filled by judicious co-option, being mainly of the governing class, a peculiarly intimate connection grew up between the gild and the ruling body of the town. This is strikingly illustrated by an ordinance of 1477, which decreed that the mayor's brethren should each "reporte and sey wele be oder, on payne of forfeture unto the Chambur of the towne of Leycestre every of them the firste tyme knowen with the faute iiis. iiid., the second tyme vis. viiid., and thoes paynalties forthwith to be levied by the Maire and the ii mastres of the Corpus Christi gylde for the tyme beyng." Defaulters were to be "committed by the Maire's commandement to warde withoute redempcion till the payne be leuyed." Should the mayor be "lacheous in execucion on that behalf," the same penalties were to be exacted from him by the two wardens of the gild. Brethren who would not be reconciled, after a third conviction, were to be "deposed and discharged of the Bynke and excluded of the feleship for euer more." Though the

wardens, in special circumstances, were thus given authority over the mayor himself, the Corpus Christi Gild was never in any sense an official part of the borough constitution. The chapel of the brotherhood was in St. Martin's church, which, through its burghal associations, has for many centuries been regarded as the civic church of Leicester.

The Gild of St. George, a fraternity of the same type as the Corpus Christi Gild, also had its chapel in St. Martin's, and a hall of its own on the east of the churchyard. Through its dedication to the national hero this society acquired a municipal character, and its procession became the chief public holiday in the town. In 1499 it was ordained that each of the Forty-Eight who had served as chamberlains should contribute sixpence a year towards its maintenance, while the remainder should pay "at the leyst *iiii*d. or more if they please," and fines were imposed upon "all maner men inhabitauntz" who, without reasonable excuse, disobeyed the mayor's summons to the Riding of the George. In this procession, a ceremony not peculiar to Leicester, a large figure of St. George, mounted and in armour, which usually stood near the chapel altar, was carried round the town with great pomp and circumstance. Following in its train were the "dragon" and the traditional characters of a legend that has been traced back to an ancient spring ritual, in which the spirit of vegetation was first slain and then brought to life again, and which survives in the mummers' play still acted in villages and by the rude mechanicals of northern towns. A borough ordinance of 1523 decreed that all future masters of the gild should cause the George to be ridden, "according to the olde aunciente costome," between St. George's Day and Whitsunday under a penalty of five pounds. Mayors and chamberlains who neglected enforcement were respectively to be fined twenty-six-and-eightpence and six-and-eightpence.

The Gild of St. Mary, St. Margaret and St. Katherine, founded in 1355 by Thomas of Beeby and twelve others, employed two chaplains to sing masses in St. Margaret's church. The brethren and sisters met on the feasts of St. Margaret and St. Katherine, settling their accounts on the morrows of those days. When a member died in Leicester a hearse and torches were provided in his parish church; should death occur away from the town, but within twelve miles of it, similar provision was made in St. Margaret's and the body was escorted home with torches. The Gild of St. John started with a grant from the feoffees of Peter the Saddler, who gave lands to the Hospital of St. John, to endow a priest to pray for his own family and the Hospital's benefactors. The chaplain had to be appointed in full Portmoot by the mayor, on the master's nomination, the charter being kept by the town. Masses were said either at the gild chapel or at the Spital on the Belgrave Road. The Gild of the Assumption, founded before 1346 to support a chaplain in All Saints, was maintained by subscriptions alone; at the death of a member each brother and sister gave one penny to the poor. A Gild of St. Michael is mentioned in a deed of 1361, but no particulars of it are known. The later Gild of the Trinity, founded in St. Mary's by the mother of the first Earl of Huntingdon, and her second husband, Sir Richard Sacheverell, of the Newarke, was maintained by collections and the generosity of the Sacheverells and others. The brethren and sisters had a dinner and a supper on Trinity Sunday, and settled their accounts at breakfast on the morrow. In 1511 they made a compact of mutual kindness, "since God is charity, and he who remains in charity remains in God." A few years later all these agreeable and piously-conceived fraternities suffered dissolution in the common overthrow.

The drama of the Middle Ages was established by

the Church "for the augmentation and increes of the Holy and Catholick Faith, and to exhort the minds of common people to good Devotion and wholesome Doctrine." With these ends in view, mysteries and miracle plays were performed on Sundays and holy days, and the chief festivals were marked by picturesque ceremonies, of which the annual Whitsuntide procession to St. Margaret's, where gifts from the various parishes for the cathedral church at Lincoln were received, may be taken as a representative example. On Whit-Mondays an image of the Virgin was taken from its shrine in St. Mary's church and carried along the main street, and through the North Gate, to St. Margaret's, where customary oblations were laid upon the high altar. Preceded by musicians, the image was escorted by twelve men impersonating the Apostles, a company of parochial virgins, and the clergy from St. Mary's and the College in the Newarke. The "great streamer of silk" floated above, and doubtless there were other features which are not recorded. A smaller procession, consisting of St. Martin in effigy, the parish clergy, and a second party of "Apostles," set out from St. Martin's, probably joining the main body, which was perhaps further augmented *en route* by contingents from the other churches. The offerings at St. Margaret's included two pairs of gloves, one pair for the Almighty, the other for St. Thomas of India. "Bread, ale, flesh, &c., for the Apostles and others," were found by St. Mary's, while the St. Martin's accounts note expenditure on "glouys and all such thynges as belongyd to the processyon," and "kakes in the churche" and "drynk for the vrgyns."

The parochial records also tell us that plays were acted in St. Mary's and St. Martin's, as presumably they were in the other churches. The earliest of these mysteries, on the life and passion of Christ, were performed in Latin by the clergy and parish

officers as adjuncts to the liturgy; at first they were purely religious in character, and, if an example discovered by Professor Skeat is rightly dated, the year 967 saw them already in vogue. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, when they began to be written in English, an element of native humour crept into them, and they became blends of sacred drama and low comedy which to a modern audience would seem irreverent. But they were presented in all good faith, and

“ . . . never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.”

As a matter of fact, in spite of their crudity and occasional coarseness, the plays have an indigenous sincerity which makes them vital works of art. When, under the stimulus of popular appreciation, the secular element outgrew the religious, lay actors made their appearance and performances were given in the open as well as in church. For the outdoor productions a wooden structure called a pageant, which consisted of a high stage with a dressing-room beneath it, was commonly used. This contrivance was wheeled from one station in the street to another, and when not in use was stored, with the properties and “germands” of the actors, in a building in the Saturday Market. Indoor performances, however, continued, and in 1551 several of the Forty-Eight absented themselves from a feast of venison, “because of the play that was in the church.”

Five years after this sacrifice of conviviality to art *The Adoration of the Shepherds* was produced in Leicester “at Whytsontyde.” This rude pastoral of the English fields, in which rough fun is made by Mak, a sheep-stealer, and his sententious wife, closes with the appearance of the herald angels and the subsequent pilgrimage to Bethlehem, where the shepherds present their homely gifts with a pleasing and familiar reverence. In *The Deluge*, another

popular favourite, usually played by the Carpenters, Noah is discovered building the "ship" in the presence of his great Taskmaster, who is personated by an actor on the stage. Comic relief is supplied by "Mrs. Noah," who at first declines to embark, and then, when she has been pushed on board, commits a gratuitous assault on the nearest part of her stooping husband. An entry in the St. Martin's accounts, "for makynge of a sworde & payntyng of the same for Harroode 8d.," refers to *The Massacre of the Innocents*, a drama in which ranting actors out-Heroded each other in search of applause. The more solemn New Testament themes received grave and decorous treatment, and one finds in them passages remarkable for their simple dignity and true feeling. Plays on saintly legend and the stories of romance followed in the course of a natural development. From this composite stock were derived the moralities and interludes, and so in the fullness of time was reached the supreme drama of Shakespeare, which shows many signs of its primitive descent.

Somewhat different from the ordinary religious dramas was *The Passion Play*, an elaborate liturgical mystery, which at Leicester was for many years performed in St. Martin's church on Palm Sunday. In 1478 it was decided, at a Common Hall, that this ceremony should be placed under the direction of twenty-four persons, two of whom should be called "bedalls," and eighty years later payments occur in the church accounts for "ale for the proffit," a vocalist who appears to have had an arduous and exacting part. There were many other *dramatis personæ* in the production, which combined the attributes of a religious service, a play and an oratorio. During the performance, if the usual custom obtained, a priest standing before the altar "made Crosses of Palme to set upon your doors and to beare in your purses to chace away the Divil."

Having described the chief mediæval institutions, we may now resume the chronological narrative from the point reached at the end of the last chapter but one. In 1512 William Wigston, one of Leicester's greatest benefactors, founded a chantry in the Newarke, with a house and maintenance for two priests, and a year or so later, as "an evening sacrifice to the Most High," in conjunction with his two brothers, established a hospital for twelve poor men and twelve poor women with a master and confrater, which he endowed with lands worth about forty pounds a year. William Wigston (1467-1536), who had married twice but was without offspring, was a rich wool-merchant, whose family had become locally prominent in the latter half of the fifteenth century; he was twice mayor of the borough, which he represented in Parliament in 1504, and four times mayor of the Staple of Calais. The chapel and almshouse which he founded stood between the Grey Friars' monastery and the Corpus Christi Gildhall, and was called in pre-Reformation times St. Ursula's Hospital. In 1541 the founder's widow augmented the endowment by a gift of twenty pounds and "the tithes of the Southfields, which she had taken from the late Abbey of Leicester for certain years." The master and confrater of the Hospital were required to be "completely learned in the science of grammar," probably that they might teach in a school connected with St. Martin's church. Except for a thirteenth-century reference to some ground called the *Boyshallherde* and a note that "*Magister Johannes qui informat pueros*" entered the Gild Merchant in 1366-7, the mediæval records are silent about education. However, a document preserved at Southwell Minster, in which "the Master of the Leicester Grammar School" is mentioned, proves the existence of a school in 1236. This may have been associated with the College of St. Mary's, and as William Wigston's intention was

in part educational, it is likely that there was a later school connected with St. Martin's and the Hospital. After the Reformation, when chantries were suppressed, the master and confrater were not allowed to rest in idleness. While the master attended to the business of the Hospital, his colleague was "a continual resident preacher in the town of Leicester," with a salary of thirty pounds settled on him and his successors by the Earl of Huntingdon, from lands late parcel of the dissolved abbey, which the earl had purchased from William Lord Parr, to whom they had been granted by the king. For this stipend, afterwards augmented by the borough, the confrater was to preach every Sunday, and on Wednesday and Friday mornings, in St. Martin's, and to see that the Hospital inmates attended that church with regularity. There was a succession of these Town Lecturers, who were much esteemed by the more serious inhabitants, and occasionally presented with "wyne and shewgar" at the general charge.

The third Earl of Huntingdon, who supported these preachers, was head of a family which, as stewards of the honour, enjoyed great prestige in the sixteenth century. In 1510 George, third Baron Hastings and first Earl of Huntingdon, grandson of the William Lord Hastings beheaded in 1483, appears as leader of the townsmen in case of war, and in 1549 his son Francis occupied the same position. When Francis died in 1561 the stewardship and receivership passed to Edward, Lord Hastings of Loughborough, who held them till his death in 1573. Then both offices were conferred upon Henry, the son and successor in the earldom of Francis, who in 1591 arranged that his brother, Sir Edward, should hold the stewardship. These high-standing officers, who were of course represented by deputies in the borough courts, served in person on commissions of muster and in the assessment of subsidies, and were in conse-

quence the recipients of complimentary presents from the town. They were all greatly respected, and Henry, Elizabeth's possible successor, President of the Northern Council and Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, converted his office into a practical guardianship of the community. At the beginning of his tenure he built a house on the abbey site, but later, transferring this to his brother Edward, he went to the mansion known as "Lord's Place," in the Swinesmarket of which the demolished "Huntingdon Tower" was the last conspicuous remnant. Though of a rather dictatorial habit, the earl possessed a high sense of public duty and was a valuable friend to Leicester. Like other noblemen of the period he was patron of a company of players, and he employed a bearward. To the men of Leicester he was *the* earl. Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, whose sister Catherine was Countess of Huntingdon, once visited the town, was feasted, and distributed largess; but he came as the Earl of Huntingdon's brother-in-law, as a guest, and not as one having official rights in the borough. The Earl of Huntingdon was in 1572 authorised to reconstruct the Wigston Hospital, and in performing this duty he respected the founder's intention by devoting a proportion of the increased endowment to educational purposes. The question of starting a school had been raised twenty years earlier, at a Common Hall, and the vicar of St. Martin's, with a colleague, had been sent to London about a piece of land which the Bishop of Carlisle, presumably John Penny, had given "to fynde a free scole in Leycester in the paryshe of Sent Margyt"; this land, they discovered, had been "xii yeres past sold away" by a former Recorder, then in disgrace for corrupt practices. In 1563-4 the decaying church of St. Peter was fitted up as a school, and in 1565 Queen Elizabeth began a yearly contribution of ten pounds, to which were added gifts from other well-

wishers. In 1573 the burgesses purchased from the Crown the materials of St. Peter's, and with them erected a substantial school-house near the High Cross. This building was completed in 1574 and did good service until about 1836, when the pupils had dwindled to three or four day-boys and one boarder, though at the end of the eighteenth century it "was filled with the sons of freemen, to the number of 300," to each of whom a loaf or bun was delivered every morning in the school porch. The school, which had many distinguished pupils and masters, was the recipient of several bequests, including a rent-charge of five marks from Sir Ralph Rowlatt, whose "father and other of his chief friends" had their beginning in Leicester. In 1611 Alderman Norrice granted a rent-charge of £3 6s. 8d. to augment the head usher's stipend, on condition that ten or twelve boys, with the usher, should, in the forenoon of the Tuesday after Trinity Sunday, sing the 113th Psalm before his house in the Saturday Market Stead, and then peacefully depart. The rules ordained that the scholars should keep in one field, appointed by the master, and that they should not swim or wade in water, "neither play in the streets, go to ale-houses, use any unlawful games, break into orchards, or rob gardens." Breaches of these regulations, and other forms of recalcitrance, were dealt with on the weekly days of correction.

The earl, when refounding Wigston's Hospital, increased the endowment by three rent-charges, amounting to £66 13s. 4d. a year, upon the abbey lands he had purchased from William Lord Parr. He assigned ten pounds from this sum to the master of the Grammar School, and ten pounds for the perpetual maintenance of two pupils at the school and one scholar at each of the Universities, and provided that the master and inmates should subscribe ten pounds, under the name of "William Wigston's

Gift." A further pound a year, making the total thirty-one pounds, had been left by Thomas Wigston, the chaplain brother of the founder. Early in the seventeenth century Alderman Robert Herrick gave fourteen pounds a year to the Hospital, and in 1639 his daughter, Elizabeth Whatton, added two small houses. Elizabeth's husband, John Whatton of the Newarke, who died in 1656, left seven pounds a year, of which £6 10s. went to maintain a poor widow, known as "the Corporation woman," in one of his wife's houses. Half the balance was to reward the master for seeing that the widow was not wronged; the rest was to be spent on wine for the mayor and burgesses who administered the trust.

In 1585 the Companies of the Twenty-Four and the Forty-Eight purchased the Grange Farm in the South Field. A year or so later they acquired from the Crown the lands and properties of the dissolved gilds and hospitals, and of the Newarke College, for the annual payment of £137 13s. 7½d., their actual rent at the time. Elizabeth was probably disposed to sell these properties by the report of a commission that it would cost over £5,000 to put them in repair. To give validity to these important transactions, the Companies felt that a more definite title and status were required. Consequently, after due application, the mayor, the twenty-four Burgesses and the forty-eight Combürgesses, empowered by Henry VII. to act for the community, were declared by charter to be a body corporate, with the name for ever of "the Mayor and Burgesses of the town of Leicester." The Brethren became *Aldermen*, and the Combürgesses, vacancies in whose number were to be filled by *inhabitants*, were changed into *Burgesses*, a limitation of the term which tended to obscure the idea that the close corporation were acting for a larger class, who also possessed burgess rights. Inhabitants who contributed to the borough charges were called *commoners*, and those

who had paid the fees of the Gild Merchant *freemen*.

Exactly ten years later a second charter, with fuller definition of powers, was obtained. Sir Edward Hastings had in 1594 transferred to the Corporation his profits from the borough courts, and in 1597 his resignation of the stewardship had been confirmed under the seal of the Duchy Court. It thus became desirable that the status of the steward and executive bailiffs should be officially recognised. The charter of 1599 gave to the "Mayor, Bailiffs and Burgesses" a constant succession and power to use a common seal. The Portmoot was declared to be a court of record, its powers were defined, and its jurisdiction in real actions was acknowledged. The Justices of the Peace, authorised by Henry VII. to try all cases of felony, were henceforth required to obtain a mandate before dealing with cases which affected life and limb. The exempt jurisdictions of the Bishop's Fee, the Newarke, and the parishes of St. Mary and St. Leonard were brought under municipal authority, and there was a subsidiary clause to ensure the legitimacy of the new wool-market, whose profits were to be employed to relieve the poor.

This second charter, though it did not give to the burgesses all they asked, brought a congeries of local districts under one central controlling body, the legally-entitled Corporation of Leicester.

¹ The fullers' *occupation* was in existence at the beginning of the thirteenth century, for the "Fullers' Gild" is mentioned in the Exchequer records of that period [*Pipe Roll*, 11 John (7 May, 1209, to 26 May, 1210)]. The reference attracted my notice when reading Mr. Farnham's unpublished extracts from the Pipe Rolls. So far as I know, this is the earliest reference to a Leicester trade fraternity, other than the Gild Merchant itself, that has yet come to light.

CHAPTER IX

THE REFORMATION AND THE SIEGE

IN 1530 Thomas Wolsey bade a long farewell to all his greatness at Leicester, and was buried with appropriate ceremony in the church of the abbey. Within a few years of this tragic climax to a career of exceptional splendour the monastic buildings, and the church which contained the cardinal's tomb, themselves lay in ruins and all the chief monuments were scattered in the dust. The friaries were demolished, the gilds and chantries were dissolved and disendowed, and the beautiful church of St. Mary in the Newarke was as though it had never been. Though the parish churches escaped destruction, their painted windows were deliberately shattered and they were denuded of every accessory and embellishment to which an idolatrous significance could be imputed. At the instance of the enemies of superstition several "relics," that had commanded tribute and reverence in the churches, were frugally sold by auction to the highest bidders. Included among these were the milk and girdle of Our Lady, the penknife and boots of St. Thomas of Canterbury, the coals that roasted St. Lawrence, the ear of Malchus, the parings of St. Edmund's nails, the bell of St. Guthlac, and the hat of St. Thomas of Lancaster. A portion of the shirt of St. Thomas of Canterbury was specially valued by expectant women, and the other items were all credited with healing powers of one kind or another. These objects were doubtless regarded with reverence by many good people, but they gave great offence to the

reformers and were among the causes which turned men's minds from the substantial merits of a system which, whatever its defects and venalities, had produced a goodly company of true saints, brought heavenly wisdom to the simple-hearted, inspired an art and architecture that have never been surpassed, and preserved its devotees from the fanatical strife of contending tongues.

The Reformation, speaking generally, followed much the same course in Leicester as it did in other towns. When Edward VI. came to the throne a copy of the Bible, with the Paraphrase of Erasmus, was placed in every church and injunctions against idolatrous usages were promulgated. Under Mary an attempt was made to revive the old order, and, at a visitation held in the churches of St. Martin and St. Margaret in 1556 by the Bishop of Lincoln, a young serving man named Thomas More, who persisted in denying the doctrine of transubstantiation, was condemned to be publicly burnt. Things were again reversed on the accession of Elizabeth, and Mr. John Lounde, prebendary of St. Margaret's, was made vicar, and, "with the consent of his loving parishioners, did extirpate and pull down all the monuments of superstition." In 1559 the stone altars in St. Martin's were removed; the rood-loft, banners and vestments were sold in 1566; and in 1571 the "images' heads," the chancel screens and the "angels' heads" were carried away.

The inhabitants of the town, whose polemic zeal had been kindled by the Lollards, for the most part took kindly to these ecclesiastical changes, but there was a minority which remained secretly loyal to the old traditional worship. The furtive survival of Romanism was demonstrated, one November Sunday in 1599, by the arrival "in our Corporacion" of an aged traveller on horseback named Barlowe, about whom the mayor solicited the honoured direction of the Earl of Hunt-

ingdon. When arrested as a dangerous wandering recusant, Mr. Barlowe was "apparrelled with a gray frize jerkin, a white canvass dublett, a paire of yellowe leather breeches and a coloured paire of nether stockes with white garters," and had in his possession divers popish books and pictures; a candle, a wafer-box and a holy-water bottle; and nearly seven pounds in money, "whereof one peece of gold was of the pope's owne coyne." This rather pathetic oddity was kept in prison until the assizes, when the judges before whom he appeared wrote to the mayor that, as he was a very aged and poor man, against whom nothing could be found, and as he had taken the oath of allegiance to her Majesty, they saw no reason why he should not be enlarged, on paying his fees and finding sureties for his appearance at the next assize.

While writing to the earl on this business, of which nothing further is recorded, the mayor asked for instructions concerning a Castle Donington baker named Matchett, who had been found by the borough officers in unlawful cohabitation with a young gentlewoman from Derbyshire. Matchett had been put in gaol, and his companion lodged in a reputable house, but the punishment usual in "suche like less abhominable and inordinate conversations" had not been inflicted, apparently out of consideration for the young lady's superior status. The earl ordered that Matchett should be sent to Ashby, that "some round course" might be taken with him. The customary punishment referred to by his worship was imposed in all its rigour upon Isabel Slater, an unchaste townswoman, who in the following April was sentenced to be carted about in a white sheet on a certain Saturday morning, and to stand before the "Gainsborough¹ Chamber" during the busiest hour of the market, and then, "on the Sabbathe daye next after, beinge Son-daye," to stand up in St. Martin's, bare-footed and bare-headed, and openly confess her sin before the

minister and congregation. The mere suspicion of a lapse was at this period looked upon with such severity, that Alderman Robert Roberts, who had filled the offices of chamberlain, coroner, steward of the fair and leather-tester, on being accused by a young widow of having several times taken advantage of her frailty, was discharged from the Bench "vntill suche tyme as he can and shalle cleire hymself of the said cryme by due and lawfull means."

Henry Grey, Marquis of Dorset, father of the ill-fated Lady Jane, lived about four miles away, at Bradgate and was a frequent visitor to the borough, staying sometimes at the Abbey Mansion, sometimes at the Angel inn, where the Queen of Scots rested on her journey to Fotheringhay and Charles I. slept the night before his arrival at Holdenby, and occasionally at the White Hart. The townsmen presented him with wine "when he came from London in Lent," at session-times, and when he "satt of the subsidy"; strawberries and wine were offered to "my lades grace" by Mistress Mayoress and her sisters, and one-and-fourpence was paid for "a gallon of wyne gyven to my lady Jane." Though exceptional favour had been shown to him, the marquis, by that time Duke of Suffolk, imprudently joined in the rebellion against the Spanish marriage, for which he suffered death in 1554. Shortly before his inglorious capture, he and his small following occupied the castle and Newarke enclosures, on their way from Bradgate to Coventry, where they were defeated by a force which sallied from the town.

About 1490 the local parliament migrated from the old Gildhall, near St. Nicholas', and began to hold its meetings in the Hall of the Corpus Christi Gild, in what is now known as Town Hall Lane. This custom was not interrupted by the confiscation of the building in 1548, when the religious fraternities were dissolved and their properties absorbed by the Crown. No rent

appears to have been paid, either before or after the dissolution, but the borough contributed various sums towards maintenance and improvements. So long as the Hall belonged to the Gild, this informal arrangement was perfectly convenient; but when the legal estate passed to the Crown it was less satisfactory, and, after a discreet interval, the burgesses found a means of getting the property into their own hands. Exactly how this was managed is not yet fully known; but among the city muniments is a document, endorsed "They dedis and Raylaisse of the towne hall bought by m^r Brayham o^r Recorder in the tyme of m^r Raynold mayre anno 1563," which sets forth how, for a sum not specified, a certain cottage or tenement, with appurtenances, to the west of St. Martin's graveyard and lately belonging to the Gild of Corpus Christi, was conveyed to Robert Brayham, Recorder of Leicester, who then represented the borough in Parliament, by Cecilia Pickerell, the widow of an affluent citizen of Norwich, who had herself just received the property as part of a large grant from the Crown. This legal instrument, which was evidently not intended to explain itself too definitely, has been partially investigated by Mr. Billson, in his *Mediæval Leicester*, and it is to be hoped that he will eventually be able to set the whole transaction in a clear light.

Soon after its conveyance to the burgesses, steps were taken to increase the building's convenience and dignity, and to reserve it strictly for municipal use. In 1566-7 a study was fitted up for the mayor, who subscribed ten shillings towards the cost, and £7 6s. 0½d. was voted "towards the reparacions," for which nine pieces of old wood and forty-four pounds of lead were purchased from "the Churche," doubtless St. Martin's. In 1572 it was decreed, under a penalty of six-and-eightpence "that the hall nor no part thereof nor no ymplementh belonginge to the same shall not at any tyme hereafter be lente

to the paratours [cloth-makers] nor no other person nor persons, neyther by the mayor for his tyme beinge, nor no other officer nor officers." In 1586 an official seat was fixed up for the mayor, and fifteen shillings was paid for "carving and making the Quenes Arms which is in the hall," and "for the gyldinge thereof 26s. 8d." Two years after, the Earl of Huntingdon; his brother, Walter Hastings, commander of the Leicestershire forces; the High Sheriff, Thomas Skeffington of Belgrave; and George Norrice, the mayor, with a distinguished company, were present at a great feast in the Hall to celebrate the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The building was habitually used by the theatrical companies which came to the town, and as Shakespeare was a member and shareholder of one of these, it is possible that he acted in it upon occasion.² In 1632, the rooms of the gild-chaplain's having been adapted for a library, the books hitherto kept in St. Martin's church went to form the nucleus of a public collection, which was subsequently augmented by various donations and bequests. These tomes are still in one of the rooms, appropriately used by the Archæological Society, whose own library is stored in the next room on the same floor. After serving as a Town Hall for nearly four hundred years, the ancient home of the Gild was in 1875 superseded by the fine Renaissance structure, designed by Mr. Francis Hames, which dominates the Municipal Square in the centre of the modern city.

The need for more thorough religious teaching became manifest towards the end of the century, and in 1580 it was ordained, that all Leicester children who were not idiots should be taught the Lord's Prayer, the Articles, and "to answe're certen poynts of the Catechisme." Twenty years later, the parishioners of St. Mary's petitioned the Earl of Huntingdon for an augmentation of their minister's Crown stipend of £8 a year, allowed "by reason of the dissolution of the

late monastery of Leicester, and no other profits but only his mansion house and little garden on the West side of the College, next to Gun Dyke." Capable teaching was not procurable on these terms, and for want of it divers of the younger sort had become "verrie vndewtifull, lewde and disordered." It was proposed that certain premises belonging to the Crown should be leased to three or four substantial men of the parish, or to the mayor and comburgesses. By their scheme, the parishioners believed, much contention would be avoided, God's word sincerely preached, vice abolished, and their own duties to God and their prince clearly defined. They further anticipated that the poor would be relieved, and her Majesty's tenements kept in repair and let to tenants of better behaviour than the persons then in occupation. Whatever the details of the plan were, it is evident that the parishioners had confidence in their fellow-townsmen's ability to make an estate yield a substantial profit, and to manage it better than the Crown officials were doing. The number of parishioners was given as "fyfteene hundred or above," about two-fifths of the borough population, which in 1587 was estimated at four thousand. Six hundred men presented themselves at the muster of 1580, eighteen hundred and eighteen persons received doles in 1584, and in 1593 the number of poor *not* visited by the plague was reckoned at from four to five hundred. The result of the petition does not appear.

"Because the other parte of the towne was then infected with the sicknes," the assizes were in 1593-4 held in All Saints' church. These outbreaks of the pestilence were of frequent occurrence, and severe measures were taken to prevent the spread of infection. It was ordained that, under a penalty of five pounds, no survivor should leave a stricken house until two months had elapsed after a death, and offenders unable

to pay the fine were expelled from the borough. Men were set to watch afflicted houses, which were victualled at the public cost. But all but the most elementary forms of sanitation had yet to be discovered, and prophylactic expedients did not go beyond an occasional cleansing of the public wells, an order against washing entrails in the Soar, and laws forbidding the indiscriminate creation of muckheaps in the streets and lanes. Proper places were appointed for the deposition of filth and garbage.

The borough legislators of the sixteenth century concerned themselves seriously about the traffic in ale, the price of which was fixed according to the value of malt, as that of bread and candles was ruled by the cost of wheat and tallow. In 1520 "good wholesome drink" was a halfpenny a gallon, and when this price was doubled it was called "penny drink." It was ordered to be made "mighty of the corne," and not sophisticated with hops, which were forbidden in 1523. Legislative activity was stimulated by the introduction of strong beer, the sale of which was rendered unprofitable in 1597, by the decree that "ale or beare stale [was] not to be sold above vid. the gallon, howe stronge or headye of the maulte so euer" it might be. Before 1573, when a brewers' fellowship was established, the trade had been mainly in the hands of alewives, "common innkeepers" and "tipplers"; from that date retailers were not permitted to brew, though householders might still make what was required for home consumption. In 1584 the brewers framed an ordinal for the suppression of strong ale, which the mayor was sanguine enough to hope would "vtterly banyshe the filthie drunkenness and disorder" then prevalent.

In the middle of the century common inns had to be closed at nine o'clock, and in 1562 victuallers were forbidden to keep open in service time "vpon the sabot daye or holy dayes"; this order was in 1578 extended

to include Wednesday and Friday mornings, and all times of sermons, catechising or "such other godlye exercises." In 1563 householders who wasted their time in ale-houses, when they ought to be otherwise employed, were made subject to fine for each offence, as were the innkeepers who encouraged them. "If any will drynke ale or beare let them send for it home to their one houses and there drynke and typple in dewe order and at conuenient [times] one neighbour with another." By a statute of James I., it was made unlawful to sit in an inn for more than an hour at dinner-time on workdays, and in 1618 "continued drinking" was forbidden by proclamation. In 1563 the ale-tasters were ordered to prepare a list of "common dronkerdes," whom six years later the frank-pledge juries were called upon to "present." In 1597, at the instance of the Queen and the Lord Chancellor, the Justices of Assize ordered that "the vnnecessarie number of alehouses might be vtterlie suppressed and that none henceforth be suffered to contynue but such a number as shall be very needfull and well ordered." All the regulations concerning inns, of which there were seventy-three in 1586, were suspended at fair-times.

The break-up of the old order and the changed conditions of industry made it necessary to devise schemes for assisting the destitute. At a Common Hall in 1552 it was "condicendyd and agreed" that, to provide occupation for the poor, each of the Twenty-Four should have two kerseys, and each of the Forty-Eight one kersey, of specified length, made in Leicester, under a fine for each default of three-and-fourpence, to be paid into the poor man's box, and in 1562 two in each parish were chosen to make collections for the poor. This order was supplemented in 1568 by a decree that, at his wedding and at the churching of his wife, each of the Twenty-Four should pay two-and-eightpence, each of the Forty-Eight one-and-four-

pence, each commoner eightpence, and each "second-commoner" fourpence, to the parson, who was to hand the fees to the collectors for the poor. In addition, a collector was licensed to visit the inns with a locked box, and ask alms of strangers for "universal relief." The various sums collected were distributed by the mayor, assisted by three or four "ancients," who were expected to see that they were properly accounted for and not misapplied. A statute of 1572 placed assessments for poor relief in the hands of the Justices of the Peace, but no parish was called upon to subscribe more than sixpence a week. In 1577 the permission given to certain persons to wear the town badge and to beg alms was withdrawn, and it was ordered that each of the Twenty-Four should pay fourpence, and each of the Forty-Eight twopence, weekly towards relieving the indigent. Certain charitable bequests were administered by the mayor and two of the chief burgesses, and the Earl of Huntingdon advanced money for the purchase of coal, which was to be sold to poor persons at sixpence or eightpence the hundredweight, the sums received being used to replenish the stock. By way of "setting the poor on work," several schemes for the encouragement of cloth-making, jersey-knitting and spinning were tried, and the profits of the wool-market, granted for the relief of the poor and sick by the charter of 1599, were employed to establish a workhouse, which adjoined the town prison.

The question of a better public supply of water also engaged attention, and in 1558 a plan for making a conduit was formed. In 1573 the burgesses undertook to use such surplus materials from St. Peter's church as might be left after the Grammar School was built "on the bringing of a Conduite of freshe water into the saide towne of Leicester." Lime-stone and brick were bought for repairing the Conduit-head in St. Margaret's Fields in 1586-7, and in 1598-9 a fee was paid

for "serching for water att the toppe of the hill towards Knighton."

In 1596, while some of these reasonable measures were being carried out, a woman called "old Mother Cooke" was hanged in Leicester for the alleged practice of sorcery, and in 1616 Robert Heyrick, ironmonger, wrote to his brother, Sir William Heyrick of Beaumanor: "We have bene greatly busyed this 4 or 5 days past, being syse [assize] tyme, and a busy syse speacyally about the araynment of a sort of wooman, Wytches, w^t 9 of them shal be executed at the gallows this fornone, for bewitching of a younge gentleman of the adge of 12 or 13 years old." Six of the women were declared to have familiar spirits, under whose obsession the boy had fallen into "divers straundg fyts in the syght of all the greatest persons here," barking, mewling, whinnying, and emitting sounds understood to be characteristic of "a pullemar, a fishe and a code." After the wretched women had been hastened to their account, James I. came to Leicester, and, taking a common-sense view of the matter, disgraced the judges who had passed sentence.

In the Civil War Leicester took the side of the Parliament, in which the county was represented by the noted republican, Sir Arthur Hesilrige. The trend of feeling was shown in June, 1642, when the messenger who brought the king's Commission of Array, after a violent altercation with the Earl of Stamford near the Angel inn, had to flee from the hostile demonstrations of the crowd which supported the earl. Shortly after this popular manifestation Mr. Henry Hastings, with two adherents from Ashby, arrived to levy forces for the king, and came into conflict with the Parliamentarians on the Horsefair Leys; what might have developed into a deadly engagement was cut short by an opportune downpour of rain, which damped the matchlocks of the Cavaliers. On July 22, 1643,

Charles I. visited the town in person, with his eldest son and Prince Rupert, and was met on Frog Island by the mayor and Corporation, who escorted him, through the North Gate, to his lodging at Lord's Place. While in Leicester his Majesty attended the assizes and was present at a service in St. Martin's, which had been specially decorated for the occasion. The external forms of loyalty were scrupulously observed, but the feeling of the citizens must have been apparent, for on the Monday the king left before the authorities had assembled to wait upon him. He was again in Leicester in August, as the Countess of Devon's guest at the Abbey Mansion, the night before the royal standard was raised at Nottingham.

A few days after hostilities commenced Prince Rupert arrived in Leicester, with Mr. Walter Hastings and a detachment of the king's cavalry, and the county was thrown into a state of perturbation by belligerent encounters. An attack was made on Lord Stamford's house at Bradgate, and then Rupert, with the main body of the Royalist horsemen, marched to Queniborough, seven miles from Leicester, whence he sent a peremptory demand to the mayor for the loan of £2,000. The king, who was appealed to, expressed displeasure at this demand and released the burgesses from payment. His letter, however, did not arrive until over £500 had been delivered to the prince, and it is needless to say that this sum was never recovered. Rupert and his cavalry were presently ordered to join the king, who took up winter quarters at Nottingham. Meanwhile Col. Hastings, now Lord Loughborough, had established himself at Ashby castle, whence he kept up a harassing warfare with Lord Grey, son of the Earl of Stamford, and carried out a series of predatory excursions which earned him the nickname of "Rob-carrier." Alarmed by these bellicose activities, which occasionally extended to the borders of the town, the citizens made defensive



MEDIEVAL BRIDGE AT AYLESTON

preparations against the worst, which eventually happened.

Early in 1645 the king decided to attack the borough, and on May 29th, when the investment was almost complete, he arrived with Rupert from the direction of Loughborough, and, skirting the town, quartered himself at Ayleston, probably at the manor-house traditionally associated with Dorothy Vernon, whose elopement with John Manners, by the way, is the romantic invention of a lady novelist. Rupert stationed his main battery between Ayleston and the south wall of Leicester, in the meadows by the Soar, other detachments of the king's forces, under capable leaders, being posted beyond the North Bridge; in the Abbey Meadow, near St. Margaret's church; on the Belgrave Road, against the site of St. Mark's; across the Humberston Road, where St. Luke's now stands; on the Harborough Road, opposite the horn-work which protected the south-east angle of the walls; and somewhere near Welford Place, opposite the main guard, which occupied an outwork south of the Horse-fair Leys. The commander of the garrison, Sir Theophilus Grey, was assisted by two experienced strangers, Colonel Sir Robert Pye and Major Innes, Captain Babington, and other gentlemen of spirit. The defences against St. Margaret's were of exceptional strength, and every effort was made to fortify the Newarke, which was directly threatened by Rupert's artillery. Questions of general policy were decided by a Town Committee, which had been formed when the sky began to lower.

On the morning of the 30th, two minatory shots having been fired from his battery, Prince Rupert sent a trumpeter into the town, offering pardon to the mayor and burgesses if they would surrender immediately. Acceptance of these terms was recommended by Sir Robert Pye and Major Innes, who perceived the numerical superiority of the Royalists and

knew that the defences were imperfect. The Committee, however, after a lengthy debate, probably in the Mayor's Parlour, begged that they might be allowed until the morning for consideration. Rupert, who while they were talking had advanced his guns under cover of the Rawdyke, and constructed a fresh battery within four hundred yards of the Newarke, demanded an answer within a quarter of an hour. Even then the Committee hesitated, until a burst of artillery from the south awoke them to the need for action. The meeting broke up in haste, some of the members going to a house near the High Cross, while others went to hearten the soldiers and watch the progress of events. The attack began in the middle of the afternoon, and in about three hours a breach had been made in the wall of the Newarke. This was repaired by means of wool-packs, brought to the spot with the assistance of courageous women, and so the fight went on for several hours. At midnight the townspeople were warned by a thunder of artillery that a simultaneous attack was commencing at all points; they put up a gallant fight, especially at the Newarke, where the cannonade was most severe, but by half-past one the town was practically at the mercy of the besiegers. By daybreak on the 31st all resistance had ceased, and the usual terms of surrender were accepted.

The last and most desperate struggle, in the course of which women fired from the upper windows of houses and hurled missiles from the roofs, took place round the High Cross and in the church and churchyard of St. Martin, the central position to which the defenders were pressed from all sides. Among the final episodes were a charge and countercharge of cavalry between the Newarke and the High Cross. As soon as a way had been cleared, Charles entered the town by the South Gate and rode through the main street to the Abbey Mansion, where he remained for two days to levy a fine of £2,000 from the vanquished

inhabitants. He then left the borough under the governorship of Lord Loughborough, who was provided with twelve hundred men to repair the fortifications. Disgraceful scenes of murder and outrage followed the surrender of the town, which was plundered unmercifully. So intoxicated were the Royalist soldiers with the lust for destruction, that, regardless of the loyal hospitality of the Countess of Devon to their master, they set fire to the Abbey Mansion immediately after the king's departure from the shelter of its roof.

The triumph of the Cavaliers was short-lived. On June 14th Charles passed through Leicester, a fugitive from Naseby, with Cromwell at his heels, and on the 16th General Fairfax appeared before the town, which had been invested on the previous day, and called upon Lord Loughborough to surrender. Loughborough was at first defiant; but a breach in the Newarke wall, made by the Parliament's cannon, convinced him that resistance was useless. Terms honourable to both sides were agreed upon, and the disarmed garrison withdrew to Lichfield. In 1648 the bulwarks raised at the siege were taken down, and Cromwell, when he passed through the town on his way to Scotland, was cordially entertained with wine, biscuits, beer and tobacco.

¹ The Gainsborough was a prison, with shops above it and an upper room for the Justices, which had stood in the Saturday Market from the time of Henry VII., if not longer.

² Mr. C. J. Billson, who has recently studied the question, thinks that it is not probable that Shakespeare acted in Leicester.

CHAPTER X

THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN LEICESTER

DURING the latter half of the seventeenth century the inhabitants of Leicester, like the majority of English people, were greatly concerned about theological matters which they had neither the learning nor the temperament to discuss with advantage. No purpose would be served by a lengthy account of the controversies of this unhappy period, but a few examples may be given of the local irregularities produced by them. One deplorable symptom of the times was the practice of leading jackasses to the font, in ridicule of infant baptism, which resulted in unseemly combats at the church doors, in which it is said the "liberty men" generally prevailed. In the course of a tumult in St. Martin's church the preacher, a Mr. Harding, was dragged from the pulpit by sectarian rioters, two of whom were fined at the summer Assizes of 1650. While the moral atmosphere was being vitiated by demonstrations of this character the vicar of St. Mary's, who seems to have been a Commonwealth intruder, appeared in public so intoxicated that "he did not go firmly, neither could he speak without fumbling in his speech," and a free-thinking shoemaker published a book called *The Light and Dark sides of God*, which was officially regarded as "opening a door to atheism and profaneness." In these depressing circumstances it was specially unfortunate that Mr. John Angel, through feeling unable to subscribe to the Engagement, was compelled to resign the offices of Town

Preacher, master of the Free Grammar School, and confrater of Wigston's Hospital. Mr. Angel was the ablest and most respected of the Puritan divines, and the withdrawal of his influence at this juncture was much to be regretted. Soon after leaving Leicester he was appointed by the Mercers' Company to a lectureship at Grantham, where he died in 1655.

In the summer of 1648 George Fox, the Quaker, who was born in the county, made a dramatic appearance in one of the Leicester "steeple-houses," probably St. Martin's, at a conference of theological disputants. At this gathering, when a female enthusiast, who wished to know what was meant by "being born again of incorruptible seed," had been silenced by the presiding minister's statement that he would not permit a woman to lift up her voice in the church, Fox stepped forward and enquired whether the clergyman called that building a church, or applied the term to the mixed multitude assembled within it. On being asked by the minister to state his own interpretation of the word, Fox declared in a confident manner: "The church is the pillar and ground of truth, made up of living stones, living members, a spiritual household, which Christ is the head of: but He is not the head of a mixed multitude, or of an old house made up of lime, stones and mud." This definition broke up the meeting, and its author proceeded to an inn, where he calmly "maintained the true church" till his last opponent had fled. Some years after this rather sensational incident the imperturbable Friend was arrested at Whetston and brought to Leicester, whence he was taken to Cromwell, who wisely allowed him to depart in peace, and in 1662 he had a short experience of Leicester gaol which is described in his published *Journal*. Though normally mild in demeanour, he commented very unkindly upon the execution of Col. Hacker, his custodian at Leicester, and two of his associates displayed

a talent for vituperation that hardly became professors of religious superiority. Another famous evangelist of the period, John Bunyan, is said to have preached in a house in Shambles Lane, now St. Nicholas' Street, which was afterwards the tarrying-place of John Wesley.

The religious-minded people who found themselves in hopeless disaccord with the Established Church gradually settled down into the leading Nonconformist bodies, which were to have so potent an influence upon the ecclesiastical and political temper of modern Leicester. In the past, especially at election times, denominational questions have aroused a great deal of unedifying bitterness in the town; but a better spirit has come to prevail, and it is now generally conceded that if men cannot worship God in unison, they should at least endeavour to do so in harmony. With the decline of religious partisanship, however, there has grown up a somewhat excessive zeal for social reforms of a rather ill-conceived and meddlesome kind, which recall the oppressive rule of the Commonwealth Saints. The city fathers of that dreary epoch carried their legislative strictures to such extremes that the amenities of life were seriously diminished and encouragement was given to the mean vices of hypocrisy and tale-bearing. They harshly suppressed all the traditional public amusements and popular ceremonies, and, even in domestic matters, arrogantly usurped the discretion of their responsible neighbours. They did not go so far as to prohibit the consumption of fermented liquors, but a military gentleman was fined for entertaining a guest with wine on the Lord's Day, which had become confused in the Puritan mind with the Hebrew Sabbath. The intellectual plane of the wiseacres who thus harassed their fellow-citizens may be gauged by their order, made in 1650, that the body of Ann Chettle, an alleged witch, should be minutely examined by four

women, whose criterions of judgment are not recorded. These ladies reported that they had "diligently searched the said Anne Chettle, from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, and found her to be clear of any such suspicion." All things considered, it is small wonder that the restoration of Charles II. was welcomed by the citizens with every sign of exultant relief.

Simultaneously with the growth of religious dissent an interest in national politics was developed by persons who had not hitherto exercised the franchise, and at a Parliamentary contest which followed the Restoration all the freemen and commons of the borough, fomented by "some active spirits hereabouts," claimed the right to vote. Though this was contrary to the custom observed since the charter of Henry VII., the commons gained their point and their votes were accepted from that date. Another advance towards modern conditions was made in 1680, when the stocking-frame, the harbinger of Leicester's industrial expansion, was introduced into the town by a man named Alsop, who came from Northampton and settled in the parish of All Saints. This portentous innovation was actively resented by the populace, who saw in it a menace to their livelihood, and for a time Mr. Alsop had to do his work secretly by night. In 1684 the power of election to borough councils was claimed by Charles II., and Leicester's charter was surrendered by the ruling body, with the prayer that it should be restored with such limitations as might be thought expedient. Towards the end of the year the burgesses received a new charter, by which the number of representative commons was reduced from forty-eight to thirty-six and elections were made subject to the approval of the king, who could dismiss any member at his pleasure. On the accession of William and Mary the constitutional basis of subsequent times was established and liberty was granted

to Dissenters. Thus, out of the welter of a singularly troubled century, the chief elements of modern Leicester had definitely emerged.

From about 1670 until her death in 1710 the mother of Jonathan Swift, whose maiden name was Abigail Heyrick, lived cheerfully in Leicester upon the modest income of twenty pounds a year. Mrs. Swift belonged to a branch of the notable Leicestershire family of Heyrick, or Herrick, of which Robert Herrick the poet was a distinguished scion, that had settled at Wigston Magna, and it was in order to be near her relatives that, after her husband's death, she came to reside in the town. As a young man Swift periodically stayed at his mother's house, and at one time caused her some anxiety by a habit of flirtation which he had contracted upon the advice of "a person of great honour in Ireland." The chief object of his local attentions appears to have been a Miss Betty Jones, who subsequently became the wife of an innkeeper named Perkins. When, in the evening of her life, Mrs. Perkins was driven to seek his pecuniary assistance, the time-sobered Dean was "ready to sacrifice £5" for the sake of old acquaintance. In spite of his youthful levities, which drew upon him the censure of the Leicester gossips, whom he described as "a parcel of wretched fools," Swift was an excellent son, on the best of terms with his happy-minded mother, by whose death he was profoundly affected.

Several members of Mrs. Swift's family are buried in the Herrick chapel of St. Martin's church, and among their tombs are some exceptionally ornate specimens of the slate memorials peculiar to the district. These slates, quarried at the Charnwood villages of Groby and Swithland, exhibit a fine variety of subdued colour and are so hard in substance that they must have been extremely difficult to work upon. They first appeared towards the end of the seventeenth century, in the form of small headstones

plainly and deeply incised with the names of persons commemorated and the dates of birth and death. In the first half of the eighteenth century the masons attained extraordinary skill in carving upon the smoothed surfaces of somewhat larger stones well-spaced inscriptions of exquisite lettering, surrounded by graceful floral patterns and a host of quaint emblems of mortality and the hope of the world to come. About 1750 the workmen became so amazingly clever that the stones lost some of their earlier and more spontaneous charm. With the introduction of machinery this art went the way of all fine handicrafts, and the graveyards of Leicester began to be desecrated by the monumental atrocities which continue to afflict us. Thanks, however, to the exceptional durability of the material, good examples of the old stones, which might well inspire a worthier and more reticent memorial art, may still be found in nearly every churchyard in the county and for a few miles beyond its boundary.

About 1700, an area of good clay having been discovered on the southern outskirts of the borough, the use of bricks became general in Leicester. The first notable building in this material was the Great Meeting chapel, in Bond Street, which was erected for Presbyterian worship in 1708. Not long afterwards, the castle having fallen into a decayed condition, the eastern side of its great hall was taken down and replaced by a neat brick front, which a few enthusiasts would like to see in turn demolished, that the hall might be patched into a semi-spurious antique, like Mr. Quinney's infamous chairs. The earlier eighteenth-century buildings were mostly of timber-frame construction, but, as time went on, many chastely-designed Renaissance houses were put up along the main street and in the neighbourhood of St. Martin's. Some particularly good specimens of this type adorn the village green at Belgrave, to which

the town has so closely approached that one passes immediately from the fried-fish odour of mean streets into an atmosphere of formal elegance which is at the same time dignified and homely. It is to be hoped that no mistaken enterprise will destroy this placid remnant of a bygone day.

The town walls, which in the Middle Ages were kept in repair by local taxation and murage tolls, had during the fifteenth century been allowed to become ruinous, and by 1492 their dilapidated remains, with the outer ditches, had been parcelled into allotments, held by eighty different tenants, which in course of time were built upon. But the four gates remained standing until 1774, when they were pulled down and sold as building material. A year or so before, the octagonal Market Hall, erected in Queen Elizabeth's reign on the site of the High Cross, where the immemorial Wednesday market was held, had been cleared away, with the exception of one column, which, raised upon steps and surmounted by a cross, was left to mark the ancient centre of the town. In 1836 this also was taken down, and purchased by a councillor named Rawson, who had it transferred to the front of the Crescent, in King Street, where it stood with very pleasing effect until the year 1922, when the owner of the property saw fit to remove it.

The growth of the population, which between 1712 and the end of the century increased from 6,450 to 16,953, was making the obliteration of several ancient landmarks inevitable. In 1748 the "Gainsborough" in the Saturday Market was demolished, and a more convenient building called the Exchange was erected in its place. This remained until 1850, when it was superseded by the present Market Hall, which was built a little to the north-west of it. In 1750 a building known as the Haymarket Assembly Rooms, used for concerts, balls, and theatrical performances, was opened on the Coal Hill, formerly the Bere Hill, out-

side the East Gate, and as early as 1736 a portion of the Horsefair Leys was laid out as a public bowling green. The first function held in the County Assembly Rooms, originally designed for an hotel, was the Annual Race Ball of 1800. The old Leicester Races, said to date from the time of James I., constituted the chief holiday of the year and were the occasion of many country people and other friends of the inhabitants visiting the town. Originally run on the Abbey Meadow, the Races were in 1742 transferred to St. Mary's Field, on a portion of which, the present Victoria Park, they continued to be held until 1883. Since that time race-meetings of a different class have been held on the new course at Oadby.

By 1727 the number of framework knitters had grown to between five and six hundred, and at the close of the century there were three thousand stocking-frames in the homes of Leicester artisans. This development was attended by several ugly manifestations on the part of the workpeople, who, exasperated by the dearth of food and the oratory of unintelligent leaders, forcibly resented the mechanical improvements introduced in the latter part of the century. In 1775 an improved knitting-machine, which the workmen believed would deprive them of employment, was dragged out of the Exchange, where it had been placed for their inspection, and wantonly broken to pieces in the Market Place. Twelve years later, when a spinner named Joseph Whetstone tried to introduce a labour-saving machine, his private house in Northgate Street was besieged by an angry mob, and he had to seek safety in flight from the town. These demonstrations, though they retarded progress for several years and forced hosiers to obtain their materials from other towns, were in the long run as futile as Mrs. Partington's attempt to push back the Atlantic with her mop. Spinning-machines were set up without opposition at the beginning of the nine-

teenth century, and the foundations of an important industry, which has brought much wealth to the town, were securely laid.

The Puritan spirit, which had been responsible for so many breaches of moderation, in the eighteenth century became a factor of great value in the social and religious development of Leicester. In 1704 the Presbyterians, who since 1680 had worshipped in an old barn in Millstone Lane, and the Independents, who occupied a building near Bonner's Lane, entered into partnership, and in 1708 built the Great Meeting in Bond Street, for the joint worship of both congregations. This chapel was at first presided over by two ministers, one of each persuasion, but in 1721 the two congregations became amalgamated under the Rev. Thomas Gee, an able and conscientious Presbyterian. The theological opinions of the congregation, however, underwent a gradual change and, about the year 1800, the chapel became definitely Unitarian, as it has since remained. Some of the members, not being able to fall in with such a momentous change, seceded to the Baptist chapel in Harvey Lane, while others joined the body of persons who, finding themselves precluded from "hearing the Gospel in every respect according to their views," eventually founded the Bond Street Congregational Church. The Harvey Lane Chapel, referred to above, which still has its loyal adherents, enjoyed the distinction of having as two of its pastors Dr. Carey, the eminent missionary and Orientalist, and Robert Hall, a native of Arnesby, Leicestershire, whose eloquence and large-minded charity endeared him to people of all shades of opinion. Under the influence of men like these, the old Nonconformists set an example of earnestness and sobriety that was of inestimable advantage to the whole community. The Society of Friends, to which have belonged many capable and high-minded citizens of Leicester, had

a meeting-house in Deadman's Lane in the north-west corner of the town. This place of assembly, with a graveyard stretching towards Soar Lane, stood on land now utilised by the Great Central Railway.

The Nonconformists also did valuable work in the cause of education. For more than a hundred years the Free Grammar School appears to have been the sole educational establishment in Leicester, but several elementary schools were provided during the eighteenth century, and, before the end of it, through the united efforts of Anglicans and Dissenters, seventeen Sunday Schools had been started in the borough. The Great Meeting Day School, which subsequently attained great importance, opened in 1708 with about twenty pupils, and did not close its doors until the Education Act of 1870 came into operation. About 1761 Alderman Gabriel Newton, the rich landlord of the Horse and Trumpet inn, who was a consistent upholder of the Established Church and had filled the office of mayor in 1736, founded the Green Coat School in Shambles Lane (St. Nicholas' Street) for thirty-five boys, who were to be clothed and educated, and instructed in "toning and psalmody." This school was rebuilt in 1809, the number of scholars being increased to eighty. Later it was reorganised under the name of Alderman Newton's Schools, for boys and girls, and was removed to new buildings in Peacock Lane, now occupied by the girls only, the male section having migrated to the adjacent Wyggeston School. St. Mary's Charity School, since rebuilt, was founded in 1785. St. Martin's Blue Coat School started in 1790, St. Margaret's Charity School in 1807, All Saints' Parish School in 1819, and St. Margaret's National School in 1834. The County Schools were opened in 1814, in Holy Bones, and the British School in Hill Street, in 1831. Somewhat later several Church schools were started by Canon Fry, an indefatigable worker in the cause of elementary education.

The existence of a degraded element in the eighteenth-century population is clearly demonstrated by many of the anecdotes told by the historian Throsby ; and when we read that, after a banquet in 1759, the inebriated mayor was assisted down the Exchange steps by the Duke of Grafton, who himself required the support of the town servants, we perceive that the social habits of the more prosperous classes stood in need of amendment. Murders, highway robberies and public executions were of frequent occurrence, and as late as 1786 the ducking-stool was employed at the West Bridge for the correction of a termagant from Redcross Street. Still more recently, in 1801, a man convicted of "grand larceny" was whipped, on a market day, for a hundred yards in the open street. A gradual transformation, however, was effected by education and other civilising influences, and the number of persons interested in religion, scholarship and the general refinements steadily increased. Several parties of French prisoners of war were quartered in Leicester in 1756, and it is said that the cultured bearing of these officers improved by example the taste and manners of the townsfolk. The introduction of stage-coaches in 1760, by making it easier for the well-to-do to visit London and other fashionable resorts, was a further stimulus to the growth of politeness and social decorum ; while the canalisation of the Soar in 1797, though it turned the elegant Bath Gardens into prosaic wharves, opened up fresh markets for the products of local industry, and so increased the number of families who could afford to cultivate the graceful arts of genteel living. Prominent among the leaders of culture at this period were Joseph Cradock, of Gumley, the friend of Garrick and Goldsmith, and of Nichols, the Leicestershire historian, and many other literary persons, and William Gardiner, the accomplished author of *Music and Friends*, who was the first to introduce the genius

of Beethoven to the notice of English musicians. Cradock, whose Republican ancestor was mayor at the time of the Siege, took the lead in planning the New Walk, originally the Queen's Walk, which was laid out as a suburban promenade in 1785 and is now a quiet and umbrageous foot-way from the centre of the town to the Victoria Park. Gardiner, who was born in 1770, lived until 1853.

The commercial system of the Middle Ages proved incompatible with the enlarged spirit of a new epoch, and, though efforts were made to preserve the old restrictions, after 1750 the borough was open to all traders except publicans. A notable sign of the changed conditions was the establishment, towards the end of the eighteenth century, of two or three Leicester banks that still await their historian. Pares's Bank, which survived all these early ventures, was founded in 1800, near St. Martin's church, and prospered increasingly until about twenty years ago, when it was taken over by Parrs' Banking Company. The business is now transacted in an impressive Renaissance building, designed by the late Mr. Perkins Pick, which, apart from the mediæval churches, is the most dignified and inspiring architectural monument in Leicester.¹ In 1771 the beneficent institution which has expanded into the Leicester Royal Infirmary was opened with great ceremony by the Bishop of Lincoln, who, at the suggestion of Dr. Watts, of the Dannett's Hall family, a physician of high character and enlightened medical views who in middle life became a clergyman, had warmly advocated its foundation. This splendid charity, generously supported from the first by all classes of people in Leicestershire, in its present extensive buildings is thoroughly well equipped for the alleviation of suffering, and the best local doctors take a pride in maintaining its efficiency. Of its modern benefactors the most memorable is the late Mr. Thomas Fielding

Johnson, who, after an exceptionally long career of judicious benevolence, which he crowned by presenting to his native city the splendid site of the Wyggeston School and of the new University College, has just been laid to rest in the ninety-third year of his age.

Between 1801 and 1851 the population increased from less than seventeen thousand to 60,584, and it cannot now be far short of a quarter of a million, the greatest advance, between 1891 and 1901, being partly accounted for by the extension of the borough boundary in 1900. This remarkable growth, mainly due to the enterprise of manufacturers, was rendered possible by the introduction of steam-power, the development of mechanical invention, and the consequent facilitation of transport. Through these agencies a wonderful transformation was effected, and Leicester, which a century ago was a countrified market town, now contains many important factories for the production of woollen underwear and the numerous articles which come under the denomination of "fancy hosiery." Thus the old industry of knitting, expanded almost beyond recognition, with the allied trades of spinning, dyeing and trimming, employs many thousands of men and women, and an almost equal number of persons is said to be maintained by the manufacture of boots and shoes, which has made striking progress since its introduction in the middle of the nineteenth century. Ancillary to these great industries is the making of shoe and hosiery machinery, which is carried on locally by several firms of more than local celebrity. A third indigenous trade is the manufacture of elastic web, which, since elastic-side boots lost their vogue, has been used for surgical appliances and in various other ways not generally understood. About 1870 multiple-shops began to be established for the sale of boots, and a number of firms whose names are household words have their headquarters in Leicester. One famous

business in the city specialises in the production of high-grade photographic lenses and scientific instruments of minute accuracy, and, assisted by the teaching of the Municipal School of Art, several Leicester printing firms have acquired eminent reputation. Other commodities made on a considerable scale are rubber tyres, ready-made clothing, women's corsets, cardboard boxes, safety-razors and cigars.

In 1836, when the Municipal Reform Act came into operation, the new Town Council, hastening to put away what they considered childish things, discarded the official robes in which their predecessors had shone resplendent; sold by auction the insignia of authority and the town plate, with all the accessories of civic feasting; and disbanded the waits who from time immemorial had made music before the mayor and accompanied him on occasions of ceremony. With similar lack of imagination the Bishop of Lincoln propounded a scheme, happily frustrated by the indifference of potential subscribers, for pulling down the ancient church of St. Nicholas and erecting on its site a building of mean appearance which he thought would be more suitable for parochial worship, and some less august person caused the historic Blue Boar to be razed to the ground. With a period of bad trade, and consequent distress among the poorer classes, came agitations against the Corn Laws, resistance to the exaction of Church Rates, and disturbances in connection with the Chartist movement, of which the local leader was Thomas Cooper, an honest and sincere man, who lived to see the folly of unconstitutional methods. These demonstrations appear to have engendered an aptitude for riotous behaviour, for in 1848 there arose a destructive tumult over the petty grievances of certain stonebreakers employed at the Workhouse, which was not quelled until a crowd of insurgents had been defeated on the Coal Hill by the clever strategy of Dr. Thomas Macaulay.

Since this event, though much dangerous nonsense has been talked by revolutionary orators, Leicester has been free from serious outbreaks of physical violence.

Though the industrial progress of the last century has not been accompanied by a corresponding intellectual advance, it would be wrong to suggest that the things of the mind have not received serious attention. The Literary and Philosophical Society, since its foundation in 1835, has consistently endeavoured to keep its members in touch with the best thought on science, literature and the arts, and of late years an increasing amount of valuable work has been done by the special sections on philosophy, economics, literature and the various exact sciences. The City Museum and Art Gallery is a much-appreciated storehouse of instruction and delight, while the Municipal and Permanent Libraries have long been of great service both to the student and to the general reader. The School of Art, especially in its present fine building and under the direction, successively, of Mr. Augustus Spencer, Mr. B. J. Fletcher, and Mr. A. T. Roberts, has not only been a most enlightened centre of æsthetic culture, but, in co-operation with the associated Technical School, has manifestly raised the local standard of design and workmanship, and has exerted an extremely wholesome influence far beyond Leicestershire. With the help of these institutions, and of the various local societies for the promotion of taste and accomplishment, Leicester has produced one supreme craftsman (the late Ernest Gimson), a few writers and musicians of note, several architects of exceptional talent, and, in the person of John Fulleylove, one very distinguished painter. With Fulleylove may be associated the name of his early friend, Harry Ward, who died before the extraordinary promise of his youth was fulfilled, and it is a matter of pride to Leicester people that the late Mr.

Edward Davies, though not a native, acquired his power of expressing the poetry of landscape in the best tradition of English water-colour during a long residence in the town.

The endowments of William Wigston's foundation had so increased in value during the centuries which followed his death, that in 1872, after provision had been made for the twenty-four old people in the new Hospital on the Fosse Road, sufficient funds were available to establish, under a scheme of the Endowed Schools Commission, the Wyggeston Schools in High-cross Street and Humberston Gate, and to settle upon them an income of £2,000 a year, which is augmented by the Joseph Pool legacy of £6,376 and various scholarships, by means of which children from the elementary schools are enabled to take advantage of the charity. In this modern scheme provision is made for scholars of both sexes. The Boys' School was opened in 1877, under the head-mastership of the Rev. James Went, and in the following year the Girls' School started, with Miss Ellen Leicester as its principal. The Boys' School, in which the old Free Grammar School is merged, provides an excellent education, which in many instances has been continued at the Universities, at very modest fees for nearly a thousand scholars; the Girls' School, conducted on similar lines, has about six hundred pupils.

In 1860, nineteen years after the Free Grammar School had been closed, the Elizabethan school-house was sold, with the sanction of the Court of Chancery, and arrangements were made for about twelve boys to be taught at the Collegiate School, in Prebend Street, which had been established in 1836. When circumstances compelled this school to close its doors in 1866, the Grammar School boys were transferred to Mill Hill House, of which the Rev. John Highton was the proprietor and head, and on that gentleman's death in

1870 were removed to a school kept by the Rev. William Stabb Matthews in Trinity Lane, where they remained until the opening of the Wyggeston School. Another educational establishment which serves a most useful purpose is the Working Men's College, founded by the Rev. David Vaughan, vicar of St. Martin's, who died at an advanced age in 1905, and whose father and two brothers had preceded him in the benefice. The religious, philanthropic and educational services of this distinguished family have been described, by one who is not given to hyperbole, as "the most beautiful chapter in the history of the Church of England in the nineteenth century." The vicars of St. Martin's, upon whose memory this commendation was bestowed, were the son and grandsons of Dr. James Vaughan, of Leicester, who framed most of the original rules of the Infirmary in 1771. Five of this gentleman's sons attained eminent distinction, one of them, who adopted the name of his mother's family, and in 1814 succeeded to the Wistow estate, being Sir Henry Halford, the famous physician. The four vicars are appropriately commemorated by the Vaughan Porch of St. Martin's church, and in the place of their devoted ministrations their name liveth for evermore.

The citizens of Leicester are naturally proud of the remarkable material progress made during recent generations, and, as we have seen, this material progress is far from being the only achievement upon which they may justly congratulate themselves. There is, however, among the more thoughtful of them, a growing consciousness that modern life lacks a unifying element which found expression in the religious, social and municipal institutions of our mediæval forefathers. This new regard for the spirit of the past, when men, though they had not found out so many inventions, seemed nearer to the truths that are essential, appears to the writer to be one of

the most hopeful signs in a generally disconcerting time. Much wisdom is to be extracted from the records of so good and ancient a city as Leicester, and to those who have the shaping of its future may be commended the assurance of an erudite living ecclesiast, that "there is no Scripture against the pouring of old wine into new bottles."

¹ An account of the early Leicester bankers will be included in a volume of Leicester studies which Mr. Charles J. Billson has almost ready for publication.

APPENDIX

THE HIGH STEWARDSHIP AND THE HONOUR OF LEICESTER

THE notion that the High Stewardship of England, held by a long succession of the mediæval earls of Leicester, was first conferred by the Conqueror upon Hugh de Grantmesnil, as an appurtenance of the "barony" or honour of Hinckley, appears to be derived from certain mistaken accounts of the origin of the stewardship, printed in Hearne's *Antiquarian Discourses*, of which the following is Sir Robert Cotton's version :

"For it appears out of our English story that among many worthy persons that came in with the Conqueror one, Sir Hugh of Grantmesnil, a Norman of noble descent, so valiantly behaved himself [that] the king rewarded him, not only with great store of lands and manors in the shires of Gloucester, Northampton, Leicester, Nottingham and Suffolk, but also richly married him to one, Adeliza, a great inheritrix of a noble family, and at the solemnisation thereof gave him the office of lord high steward of England. By this Adeliza he had two daughters, Petronilla or Pernell the eldest, and Adeliza the second, who married Roger Bigod, a Norman. All the inheritance of the said Sir Hugh Grantmesnil was divided betwixt those two daughters, saving that in the partition the lordship of Hinckley and office of High Steward of England fell to Pernell, because she was the eldest. This Pernell married Robert ove les blanches-mains . . . the son of Robert le Bossu Earl of Leicester. . . . So that this Robert was the first of the house of Leicester in whom this office took root."

Though there are elements of truth in it, this story contains a number of statements that do not accord with established facts; and it is now thought to be a fabrication,

designed to enable John of Gaunt to support a claim to the stewardship of England, when in right of his wife Blanche, he succeeded to the Lancastrian portion of his father-in-law's estates. Subsequent events show that Gaunt set a high value upon the office of steward, and it is also clear that this had come to be regarded as an hereditary appurtenance of the honour of Leicester. So long as this view prevailed, much as he might desire it, Gaunt had small chance of getting the stewardship; for practically the whole of the Leicestershire part of the inheritance had passed to William of Hainault, through his wife Maud, the elder daughter of Henry of Lancaster. There was, however, one substantial Leicester property, the manor of Hinckley, long held by the earls of Leicester, which had been included in Blanche's share of her father's possessions. This being the situation, it might easily occur to Gaunt, who allowed no scruple to interfere with the realisation of his ambitions, that one way of securing the office he coveted would be to show that this was originally attached, not to Leicester, as it was generally understood to be, but to the manor of Hinckley, of which he was by inheritance the lord. It was not unprecedented for unjust claims to be bolstered up by fraudulent evidence, and it is probable that to a scheme of the sort indicated we owe the ingenious mixture of history and fiction recorded by Sir Robert Cotton and other writers. The story does not seem to have been used in any legal proceedings, presumably because Gaunt found a more expeditious means of obtaining, not only the stewardship, but the earldom of Leicester and all that went with it.

The first impediment to our accepting the "barony of Hinckley" tradition is the fact that there is no evidence that Hugh de Grantmesnil ever possessed any interest in Hinckley at all. In the Domesday Book the manor of Hinckley is entered as part of "the land of Earl Aubrey," and is described as being then (1086) "in the King's hand." Earl Aubrey was Aubrey de Couci, earl of Northumbria, who, having found it impossible to govern that unruly province, had resigned his earldom and the rest of his English estates, and had returned to Normandy. The statement that Hinckley came to Robert Blanch-

mains, the third de Beaumont earl of Leicester, through his wife Petronilla, is equally unsupported by contemporary evidence, and seems to be against probability. The *Matriculus* of bishop Wells says that the church of Hinckley was given to the abbey of Lyre, in Normandy, by William FitzOsbern, whose great-granddaughter Amicia married Robert le Bossu, the second de Beaumont earl and father of the Robert who married Petronilla de Grantmesnil. William FitzOsbern's son, Roger earl of Hereford, was dispossessed of his English estates for rebellion; but, as Mr. H. J. Francis conjectures, Hinckley may have been restored to the family in the person of Amicia, who brought it to the earldom of Leicester. This view is to some extent confirmed by a charter, printed by Nichols the Leicestershire historian, in which occurs the statement that Amicia held "*duas marcas argenti in villa de Hinckley.*" The first earl of Leicester known to have held the stewardship was Robert le Bossu, who claimed it as the representative of William FitzOsbern, whose father had held a similar office in Normandy. This claim was obviously made in right of his wife, but not apparently in connection with Hinckley, and certainly with no reference to Hugh de Grantmesnil. So far as has been ascertained, neither the manor of Hinckley nor the stewardship was held by any earl of Leicester before Robert le Bossu, and it was in him, and not in Blanchesmains, that "this office took root."

To understand in detail the origin and development of the English stewardship, it is necessary to read *His Grace the Steward and Trial of Peers*, an extremely interesting and learned book by Mr. L. W. Vernon Harcourt, published by Messrs. Longmans and Co. in 1907. The most that can be done here is briefly to sketch that evolution, and to explain how the office was acquired by the various earls of Leicester who held it. The High Stewardship of England, an office eagerly desired by Simon de Montfort and John of Gaunt, was derived from an office, comparatively menial until after 1070, of the French royal household. The organisation of the Conqueror's English household, apart from certain elements borrowed from Anglo-Saxon custom, was based upon the practice of the petty

Norman court, and this in turn was modelled upon the royal household of France. The French officers corresponding to the English stewards were called dapifers, and they were, as the name implies, primarily the sewers or caterers of the king's banqueting hall. The office, however, was held by many persons of high rank, and between 1070 and 1100 it was so remarkably developed, that during the greater part of the twelfth century the French dapifers were the pre-eminent ministers of state, with powers comparable to those of the English justiciars, who were responsible dignitaries of viceregal standing. But at the time when the English household was formed, the French dapifers had not risen above their original status, and the early dapifers of this country and of Normandy were, as one would expect, functionaries of even less importance than their French contemporaries. In the Norman court several dapifers were in existence simultaneously, and in the early Norman period the same rule was observed in England, though the services of the more illustrious holders of the office appear to have been reserved for coronation festivals and other high ceremonious occasions. Some of these early stewards of the household were described in the charters of their investiture as "dapifers of England and Normandy," others simply as "dapifers of England." During the anarchy of Stephen's reign, the dapifership tended to become hereditary in certain families, notably those of Bigod and de Courci, and eventually it came to be regarded as an appurtenance of the earldom of Leicester. The lands associated with the stewardship and other offices of its class were held by a tenure known as grand serjeanty; that is to say, they were enjoyed contingently upon their holder performing the proper duties of his office, which ranked as honorary service to the king. When a person entered into possession of an estate by grand serjeanty, he paid to the king a "relief" of one year's value of the land, much or little, which constituted his emolument. Though in many cases of tenure by grand serjeanty the land was of more importance than the service by which it was held, the stewardship, through the reputation it acquired, was in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a much greater asset than the land that went with it. With these facts in

mind, we may consider, in order of time, how successive earls of Leicester came to be dapifers, seneschals or stewards, as the office was variously called at different periods.

In 1153, certain lands in England and Normandy, with the hereditary dapifership of both countries, were granted to Robert de Beaumont (le Bossu), earl of Leicester, and Robert his son, by Henry of Anjou, who was then at Bristol. These grants were of course *ultra vires*, for Henry, as duke of Normandy, had no authority in England; but he duly confirmed them after he became king. Le Bossu had claimed the office as the representative of his wife's ancestor, William FitzOsbern, earl of Hereford, one of the foremost Normans of his time, and one of the first to act as viceregent in England, who, though the view that he himself was dapifer seems to be erroneous, was the son of Osbern, a famous dapifer of the Norman court. In 1142, the empress Matilda had conferred a similar office upon Geoffrey de Mandeville, earl of Essex, who subsequently turned traitor and died in disgrace. Geoffrey had claimed as representing Eudo, another celebrated Norman dapifer, and in Mr. Harcourt's opinion the object of both earls was to obtain an office which, with French precedents in their minds, they considered practically equivalent to the justiciarship. Many other dapifers were appointed at this period, but none of them stood upon the same footing as the earls of Leicester and the Bigods, earls of Norfolk. Both in character and talent, Robert Blanchesmains was greatly inferior to his father, le Bossu, an extremely capable man who served Henry II. well and loyally as justiciar, and it was probably in the main out of respect for his father and grandfather that he was treated so leniently after his rebellious escapades. At the coronation of Richard I., he carried a sword in the procession, as seneschal, this style having superseded the term dapifer on Richard's accession. His son and successor, Robert FitzParnel, was a prisoner in France at the time of Richard's second coronation, and presumably Roger Bigod officiated. On the accession of John, FitzParnel disputed Bigod's right to act as seneschal, and the matter was settled by Roger agreeing to withdraw all future claims to

the office, in consideration of ten knights' fees to be assigned to him by Robert. These knights' fees were in fact never transferred, for Robert was in default when he died. The effect of the arrangement was, nevertheless, to leave the earls of Leicester sole hereditary stewards of the household. The office, however, still remained an essentially unimportant one, and no one had at that date acquired any valuable prestige through holding it.

When FitzParnel died without issue, the earldom became the heritage of Simon, the persecutor of the Albigenes, and the eldest surviving son of FitzParnel's sister Amicia, and her deceased husband, Simon de Montfort. The heir being in the allegiance of France, there were difficulties about the succession, and in consideration of a fine of a thousand marks, but without prejudice to any future claim by Amicia, the greater part of the Leicester estates was granted to Saer de Quincy, the husband of FitzParnel's younger sister Margaret. This was in 1205. A year or so later, however, Simon is referred to as earl of Leicester, and in 1207 the king confirmed a partition of the de Beaumont estates between him and Saer de Quincy, reserving to Simon, among other things, the chief messuage in Leicester and the stewardship of the household. Though Simon appears to have visited England to take seisin, it is doubtful whether he ever enjoyed the profits of his estates; for they were almost immediately seized by John, nominally for a debt due to the crown. In 1213, in part compliance with a papal order, the king transferred the estates to Randolph earl of Chester, as custodian on Simon's behalf, and they were in Chester's hands when the more famous Simon de Montfort, Amicia's grandson, came to England after his father's death. At the second coronation of Henry II., Roger Bigod probably acted as steward. Subsequently there was a dispute between the earls of Norfolk and Chester, Roger complaining, through his son Hugh, that the knights' fees, in consideration of which he had resigned his claims, had never been conveyed to him. Chester was ordered to hand them over, but Roger died before he had been induced to comply. This episode makes one think that Randolph's generosity in resigning the Leicester estates to the younger Simon, the earl who

died at Evesham, was more apparent than real, though there is nothing to suggest this in Simon's narrative.

In 1229, the Simon de Montfort who figures so prominently in our national history came to England, and on appealing to the king was promised the earldom and honour of Leicester, with the stewardship, as soon as the lands should be relinquished by Chester. This promise was confirmed in February, 1230, by letters patent attested by Randolph himself, but his tenure was not satisfactory or strictly valid until February, 1238-9, when he was formally invested with the earldom and the stewardship in the presence of his brother Amaury, who in the following month released the properties to Simon and the heirs of his body, reserving to the grantor the fee simple on the determination of the estate tail. In Amaury's charter, which was confirmed by the king a week later, the stewardship (*in senescalcia domini regis Henrici predicti*) is expressly mentioned among the services incidental to the Leicester inheritance. The probable reason for the long delay was that Simon wished to hold the earldom, with its appurtenances, as the heir of his father and the de Beaumonts, and to establish his position as an English nobleman of ancestral validity. Had they come to him by special grant, his status would merely have been that of an alien favoured by Henry. Several facts in Simon's career fit this hypothesis.

At this point it is desirable to explain the true cause of the earl's quarrel with his royal brother-in-law, which occurred in the August following Simon's investiture. In the summer of 1239, the queen surprised and rejoiced the nation by giving birth to a son, and Simon and his countess were invited to the churching. The earl, in spite of his social advancement, was in a chronic state of pecuniary embarrassment, and, to obtain the money required for the papal dispensation and to effect his reconciliation with Richard of Cornwall, he had borrowed a large sum from Thomas of Savoy, giving the king's name, without asking permission, as surety for the amount. Knowledge of this reached Henry just before the churching, and when Simon and the countess arrived for the ceremony, he mercilessly turned them away before the whole court, roundly abusing

Simon and uttering the inexcusable slander against his own sister's fame. The earl and countess were overwhelmed and broke into tears, but the king was implacable, and on the next evening, "in the gathering darkness, [Simon] and his wife then great with child dropped down the tideway of the Thames in a little boat, and straightway fled to France." Simon returned to England in April, 1240, and he and Henry patched up a superficial friendship which lasted for some years, during which the earl was constantly begging and receiving lands and money from the king. The breach, however, was of a kind that could never be thoroughly healed.

In the years following his return, Simon distinguished himself as a warrior in the Holy Land and in France, and in 1248 he was appointed seneschal of Gascony, with plenary governing powers. After he had cowed the Gascons into subjection, he again visited France and was offered the revived stewardship of that kingdom. His experience of authority in Gascony, and the alluring French offer, which he was shrewd enough to decline, doubtless enlarged his view of the possibilities of the English office he had inherited. A charter, drawn up before Simon's investiture, by which Amaury attempted to convey the stewardship to his brother, shows how the de Montforts magnified the office and arrogated to themselves a fuller title to it than they really possessed, and as early as 1243, Simon, advocating a policy opposed to Henry's, openly said at a council of war held at Saintes: "As for the king, treat him like Charles the Simple; there are iron-barred rooms at Windsor well adapted for his residence." This remark, and the impudent exaltation of the stewardship, suggest that, even in those early days, de Montfort entertained some idea of usurping the king's authority and himself ruling as High Steward of England. His later conduct, when he had by his own deeds raised the office to a status of high importance in the general estimation, also implies that he intended to use it to strengthen his authority as dictator of the realm. After the battle of Lewes, when he was by virtue of arms acting as viceroy, he constantly figured as seneschal of England on documents bearing the great seal, and in April, 1265, he

instituted, in the king's name, an enquiry into what were the rights and liberties of "the stewardship of England, in right of the earldom and honour of Leicester." But the fates were too strong for him, and his vaulting ambition received its quietus at Evesham, where "the dissimulating, ruthless, excommunicated autocrat perished gloriously for the liberties of England."

Henry III. first granted the earldom, with the stewardship, to his son Edmund Crouchback and his heirs, by letters patent of 25th October, 1265, in which the office was described as *senescalcia Anglie*, the style adopted by Simon de Montfort. These letters were confirmed by a charter, dated 26th October, 1265, which, though attested, was never delivered, perhaps because prince Edward objected to the grant in fee of so dangerous an office. Further letters patent were subsequently issued, conferring upon Edmund the stewardship for life only, and as these were expressed so as not to be binding upon the king's heirs, strictly speaking the office lapsed at the death of Henry III. At the coronation of Edward I., Edmund apparently set up a claim that he failed to establish; but, as a special favour, he was permitted to hold the office for the term of his own life, probably on the condition that he executed the deed, dated the day after the coronation, by which, for himself and his heirs, he formally renounced all hereditary pretensions. Edmund, being a man of no special distinction, the stewardship fell back into obscurity, and on his death in 1296 it automatically expired. Thomas of Lancaster, his son and successor, carried the sword "Cur-tana" at the coronation of Edward II., and shortly afterwards the stewardship was granted to him and his heirs, as an office appurtenant to the earldom of Leicester.

The circumstances of the reign of Edward II. caused the doctrine to be promulgated, that when the king mis-managed the affairs of the nation, or allowed himself to be influenced by evil counsellors, it became the duty of the hereditary officers to coerce him, or, in extreme cases, practically to take the government into their own hands. According to Matthew Paris, at the coronation of queen Eleanor in 1236, the earl of Chester—not Randolph, who died in 1232, but John "de Scotiâ," the son of his sister

Maud—carried the sword “Curtana,” to symbolise his power, as earl-palatine, to coerce the king if occasion required. Thomas, had he been a man of de Montfort’s capacity, might have cited this precedent and, as steward of England, ruled in the king’s stead. Being what he was, his career ended in shameful disaster, and, as he left no posterity, the stewardship once more became extinct. Though his brother, Henry of Lancaster, who obtained a reversal of the attainder and succeeded to the earldom, could not claim as an heir in tail, he appears on the Charter Roll as having officiated at Philippa’s coronation, having, we must suppose, claimed on the ground that the office had long been attached to the honour of Leicester. When he died, the earldom and the stewardship passed, seemingly without question, to his more famous son, the first duke of Lancaster, through whom it ultimately came to John of Gaunt.

By what nefarious means Gaunt is believed to have obtained the stewardship, with the Leicester estates, has already been told. At the coronation of Richard II., he issued a proclamation bidding all persons who claimed to perform services or to receive fees at the ceremony to bring their petitions before him or his deputies. The numerous claims then advanced were heard by the duke himself, in the White Hall of the palace at Westminster, and in the account of the proceedings, enrolled by his order, it is stated that he presided as steward of England (*tanquam senescallus Anglie*). Thus was established, perhaps with a deliberate implication of ancient association with the stewardship, though no previous seneschal had ever held such a court, the picturesque court of claims, which has survived to the present day. Interesting as this court is to persons of antiquarian tastes, its jurisdiction is quite unimportant, and its decisions are not binding upon the king or upon any future court of claims. What is significant, from our present point of view, is, that Gaunt, who in any case was the proper person to hear the coronation petitions, caused it to be put on record that he did so “*tanquam senescallus*.” The office, through having been held by many distinguished persons, had unquestionably developed into one of great prestige, and everything points

to the conclusion that Gaunt intended to make the most of it, having much the same thoughts in his mind as de Montfort had harboured before him. The last steward of the old order was Thomas, duke of Clarence, the second son of Henry IV. As this prince was only eleven when his father was crowned, his duties were performed by Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester, and at the coronations of Henry V. and of queen Katherine he was also represented by deputies. After Clarence's death, the office was never granted except for special occasions; for when the earldom of Leicester became merged in the crown, the Lancastrians had no motive for maintaining its existence.

In no contemporary charter or record that has come to light is the stewardship associated either with Hugh de Grantmesnil or with "the honour of Hinckley," and practically all the evidence that can be brought forward is against the notion it was our purpose to disprove. We may therefore conclude that the story told by Sir Robert Cotton and other late writers is an artfully generated myth—a myth which Mr. Harcourt rightly considered it his duty to bury, not to praise.

INDEX

- ABBEY, Leicester, 17, 40-42, 43, 54,
 107, 113
 Mansion, 42, 109, 116, 124, 126,
 127
 Meadow, 125, 135
 Ale Regulations, 120, 121
 Alsop, 131
 Amicia, Countess of Leicester, 148
 Angel inn, 116, 123
 Angel, Rev. John, 128, 129
 Anglo-Saxon-Danish Period, 27-32
 Anna, Black, 11, 12
 Armada, Spanish, 118
 Art, School of, 69, 142
 Ashby-de-la-Zouch, 115, 123, 124
 Assizes, 57, 83, 98, 115, 119, 124
 Aubrey (de Couci), Earl, 147
 Ayleston, 125

 Baileywick, Lease of, 72, 89, 90
 Banks, 139
 Bath Gardens, 138
 Beaumont, Robert de (of Meulan),
 35-37, 39, 78
 (1e Bossu), 37, 40-42, 78,
 146 *et seq.*
 (Blanchesmains), 42, 43,
 146 *et seq.*
 (FitzParnel), 43, 44, 45,
 150, 151
 Belgrave, 133, 134
 Gate (Road), 22, 43, 73, 74,
 103, 125
 Berehill, 54, 134
 Bishopric, Anglo-Saxon, 28-30
 Bishop's Fee, 28, 30, 80, 81, 84,
 85, 88, 112
 Bishops of Lincoln. *See* Lincoln
 Black Death, 70
 Blanche of Lancaster, 71, 147
 Blue Boar inn, 76, 141
 Bohun, Mary de, 69, 72
 Boot Manufacturing and other
 Modern Industries, 140, 141
 Borough English, 49, 84
 Boston Fair, 86, 87
 Bosworth, Battle of, 76, 77
 Bow Bridge, 76, 77

 Brayham, Robert, 117
 Breteuil, 37, 40
 Bricks, 20, 133
 Bridgesilver, 38, 39
 Bromkinsthorpe, 28
 Bull-baiting, 13-15
 Burh, 31

 Carey, Dr., 136
 Castle, Leicester, 34, 35, 36, 43, 57,
 58, 65, 70, 71, 79, 81, 89, 90, 116,
 133
 Celtic Revival, 27
 Tradition, 10-12, 17, 18
 Chamberlains, 91
 Charity and Elementary Schools,
 137
 Charles I., 116, 124 *et seq.*
 Chartist Movement, 141
 Charyte, William, 41
 Chaucer, Geoffrey, 71, 73
 Chester, Randolph, Earl of, 45, 46,
 151 *et seq.*
 Chettle, Anne, 130, 131
 Churches (*Mediæval*):
 All Saints', 33, 103, 119, 131
 St. Clement's, 54
 St. Leonard's, 112
 St. Margaret's, 30, 33, 55, 70,
 73, 103, 104, 109, 125
 St. Martin's, 23, 33, 73, 79, 101,
 102, 104, 106, 107, 114 *et seq.*,
 128, 129, 132
 St. Mary's (de Castro), 31, 36,
 40, 68-70, 73, 75, 103, 104,
 112, 119
 St. Mary's (in the Newarke),
 67-71, 72, 75, 104, 107, 113
 St. Michael's, 33, 42
 St. Nicholas', 20, 23, 30, 33, 79,
 83, 141
 St. Peter's, 33, 74, 109, 122
 Civil War, 123-127
 Clowne, William of, 41, 67
 Coal Hill, 134, 141
 Cock Muck Hill Almshouses, 43
 Cocks, Game of throwing at, 16
 Collegiate School, 143

Comburgesses, 93 *et seq.*, 111
 Common Halls, 93 *et seq.*, 98, 106,
 109, 121
 Commons, 93-95, 131
 Commonwealth Saints, 130
 Connecherchie, 78, 79, 83
 Constance of Castile, 72, 75
 Coroners, 91, 92
 Corporation of Leicester, 78
 County Assembly Rooms, 135
 Cowhay Charter, 48
 Cradock, Joseph, 138
 Cromwell, Oliver, 127, 129

Dane Hills, 11-13
 Danelaw, 30, 31
 Danish Influence, 31
 Dannett's Hall, 24, 139
 Devon, Countess of, 124, 127
 Domesday Book, 33
 Dominicans, 53, 54
 Drama, Mediæval, 98, 103-106

Easter Hunt, 12, 13
 Edmund Ironside, 31
 Education, Religious, 118, 119
 Edward the Confessor, 33
 Edward I., 57, 154
 Edward II., 57 *et seq.*, 154
 Edward III., 62 *et seq.*, 71
 Edward IV., 75, 76, 90, 92
 Elizabeth, Queen, 109, 111
 Ethelfleda, 31, 36
 Evesham, Battle of, 52
 Exchange, the, 134, 135

Fairfax, General, 127
 FitzOsbern, William, 148, 150
 Five Boroughs, 30, 31
 Fosse Road, 22, 26
 Fox, George, 129
 Franciscans. *See* Grey Friars
 Frankpledge, Views of, 54
 French Prisoners, 138
 Friends, Society of, 136, 137

"Gainsborough Chamber," 115, 134
 Gartree Road, 26
 Gates of Town (*Mediæval*), 134
 North, 54, 92, 124
 South, 26, 54, 126
 East, 101, 134
 West, 76
 Gaunt, John of. *See* Lancastrian
 Earls

Gavelpence, 37-39
 George, Riding of the, 102
 Gilds:
 Gild, Corpus Christi, 100-102,
 117
 Gild Merchant, 14, 70, 78 *et*
seq., 96 *et seq.*, 107, 116
 Gildhall, Corpus Christi, 83 *et*
seq., 101, 107, 116
 Merchant, 83 *et seq.*
 St. George's, 102
 Gilds, Craft, 96-100
 Religious, 96, 100-103
 Grammar School, Free, 15, 129
 Grantmesnil, Hugh de, 34, 35, 146
et seq.
 Ivo de, 35
 Great Meeting Chapel, 133, 136
 Day Schools, 137
 Green Coat School, 137
 Grey Friars, 53, 75, 77, 107
 Grey, Henry, Marquis of Dorset
 (later Duke of Suffolk), 116
 Lady Jane, 116
 Lord, 124
 Sir Theophilus, 125
 Groby, 43
 Grosseteste, Bishop, 54, 55
 Gun Dyke, 119
 Gynewell, Bishop, 67
 Halford, Sir Henry, 144
 Hall, Robert, 136
 Hare Customs, 13
 Harvey, Dame Mary, 68, 69
 Lane Chapel, 136
 Hastings, William, Lord, 75, 108
 Henry (Lord Loughborough),
 123 *et seq.*
 Haymarket Assembly Rooms, 134
 Henry III., 46-48, 50-53, 56, 152 *et*
seq.
 Henry IV., 71, 72, 75, 90, 156
 Henry V., 68, 156
 Henry VI., 75
 Henry VII., 77, 90, 111, 112
 Herrick, or Heyrick, Abigail, 132
 Robert, the poet, 132
 Robert, 111, 123
 Sir William, 123
 Hesilrige, Sir Arthur, 123
 High Cross, 19, 57, 76, 109, 126
 Highcross Street, 19, 134
 High Street, 19, 82
 Hinckley, 15, 146 *et seq.*
 Horsefair Leys, 123, 135

Hospital, St. Edmund's, 43
 St. John's, 103
 St. Leonard's, 43
 Trinity. *See* Newarke Hos-
 pital
 Wigston's. *See* Wigston's Hos-
 pital
 in Newarke. *See* Newarke Hos-
 pital
 Host Stone, 18
 Humberston Road, 125
 Huntingdon, 3rd Earl of, 68, 108
et seq., 118, 122
 4th Earl of, 114, 115
 Incorporation, Charters of, 111,
 112, 131
 Infirmary, Royal, 139
 Isabel, Countess of Leicester, 71
 Isabella, Queen, 57 *et seq.*
 Jewry Wall, 20, 21
 Jews, Mediæval, 20, 49
 Jones, Betty, 132
 Jurats of Leicester, 36-39, 79 *et seq.*
 Jurats' Oath, 80
 Jury, Trial by, 37
 Justices, Itinerant, 63, 98, 115, 121
 of Peace, 76, 92, 98, 112
 Katherine, Austin Friary of St., 54
 Queen, 90
 King Lear. *See* Lear
 Knighton, Henry of, 41, 43, 62, 67,
 70
 Lancastrian Earls of Leicester:
 Edmund Crouchback, 56, 57,
 81, 154
 Henry, Duke of Lancaster, 66-
 71
 Henry of Grosmont, 59-65, 155
 John of Gaunt, 68, 71-75, 147
et seq.
 Thomas of Lancaster, 57-59,
 154, 155
 Lear, King, 9-11
 Lecturers, Town, 108
 Leicester Forest, 11, 12, 38, 39
 Leicester, Origin of Name, 10
 Lincoln, Bishops of, 28, 30, 34, 40,
 54, 80, 114, 139, 141
 Literary and Philosophical Society,
 22, 142
 Lollards, 73, 74, 114
 Lord's Place, 109, 124

Magna Carta, 43, 44
 Mallory, Anquetil de, 42
 Market Hall, Elizabethan, 134
 Modern, 134
 Mary, Queen of Scots, 116
 Maud, Countess of Hainault, 71,
 147
 Maudit, Simon, 38
 Mayor, Office of, 85, 90-95
 Mechanics' Institute, 22
 Merchant Gild. *See* Gild Merchant
 Merchant Gildsmen's Oath, 84
 Mint in Leicester, 33
 Montfort, Amaury de, 45, 152 *et*
seq.
 Amicia de, 43, 44, 151
 Eleanor de, 47, 52
 Eleanor de, Princess of Wales,
 52
 Guy de, 52
 Gwellian de, 52, 53
 Henry de, 52
 Simon de (d. at Toulouse), 45,
 151
 Simon de (Earl of Leicester),
 39, 46-55, 56, 84, 92, 151 *et*
seq.
 Simon de (the Younger), 50, 52
 Morningspeech, 85, 86, 89, 93
 Mortimer, Roger, 59, 60
 Mountsorrel, 43
 Municipal Buildings, 118
 Municipal Reform Act, 141
 Museum, 22, 24-26, 142
 Naseby, Battle of, 127
 Newarke, the, 15, 16, 60, 66-70,
 103, 107, 112, 116, 125-127
 College, 67-70, 107, 111
 Hospital, 60-62, 67, 68
 Newton's Schools, Alderman, 137
 New Walk, 26
 Nonconformity, 130, 136, 137
 Norrice, Alderman, 110
 North Bridge, 125
 Open Fields, 28, 35
 Parliaments, 51, 52, 57, 64, 75
 Parr, William, Lord, 110
 Parr's Bank, 139
 Penance of Jesus Christ, Friars of
 the, 54
 Penny, John, 41, 109
 Permanent Library, 142
 Petronilla, Countess of Leicester,
 42, 43, 146 *et seq.*

- Pickerell, Cecilia, 117
 Plague, 119. *See also* Black Death
 Poor, Relief of, 121, 122
 Population of Leicester, 34, 119, 134, 140
 Portmannmoot, or Portmoot, 78 *et seq.*, 103, 112
 Primogeniture, Law of, 49
 Prison, County, 92
 Processions, 30, 101, 102, 104
 Quarters, 93
 Queniborough, 124
 Quincy, Saer de, Earl of Winches-
 ter, 45, 46, 151
 Margaret de, Countess of Win-
 chester, 45, 46, 151
 Races, 135
Ratæ Coritanorum, 19-27
 Raw Dykes, 21, 126
 Records of Leicester, 76, 92, 109, 117
 Reformation, 107, 113 *et seq.*
 Relics in Churches, 113
 Repyngdon, Philip of, 41, 74
 Richard II., 71
 Richard III., 76, 77, 90
 Roman Period, 19-27
 Defences, 19, 20
 Local Government, 26, 27
 Milestone, 22
 Miscellaneous Remains, 25, 26
 Religious Ideas, 23, 24
 Tessellated Pavements, 24
 Tiles, 25
 Withdrawal, 27
 Rowlatt, Sir Ralph, 110
 Rupert, Prince, 124 *et seq.*
 Sacheverell, Sir Richard, 103
 Sack of Leicester (1173), 42, 43
 Saddington, William of, 41
 Saddler, Peter the, 103
 St. John, Chapel of, 43, 73, 74
 Hospital of, 92
 St. John's Stone, 17, 18
 St. Nicholas' Street, 19, 130
 Sanitation, 70, 120
 School, Free Grammar, 109, 110, 122, 137, 143
 of Art, 141
 Sepulchre, Chapel of St., 54
 Shakespeare, 10, 106, 118
 Shambles Lane. *See* St. Nicholas' Street
 Skeffington Mansion, 68
 Skeffington, Thomas, 118
 Slate Headstones, 132, 133
 Soar, River, 9, 10, 20, 21, 39, 48, 54, 77, 92, 125, 138
 South Field, 48, 107, 111
 Spinning Machines, 135
Stallati, 82, 96
 Stamford, 14, 87
 Earl of, 123, 124
 Stewardship of England, 45, 46, 56, 59, 146 *et seq.*
 Stewards of the Honour, 64, 89, 91, 108 *et seq.*
 Stocking-frame, 131, 135
 Swift, Abigail, 132
 Jonathan, 132
 Swinesmarket (High Street), 109
 Swynford, Katherine, 72, 73, 75
 Thorn, Holy, 67
 Trinity Hospital. *See* Newarke Hos-
 pital
 Twelve Bridges, 21
 University College, 140
 Vaughan Family, 144
 Victoria Park, 48, 135
 Walls, Mediæval Town, 20, 134
 Wards, Twelve, 92
 Water Supply, 21, 122, 123
 Watts, Dr., 139
 Wesley, John, 75, 130
 West Bridge, 24, 39, 54, 138
 Whatton, Elizabeth, 111
 John, 111
 "Whipping Toms," 15, 16
 White Friars, 54
 White Hart inn, 116
 White Horse inn, 77
 Wigston, Roger, 94
 Thomas, 68, 110
 William, 68, 107, 143
 Wigston Magna, 132
 Wigston's Hospital, 69, 107, 109, 110, 111, 129
 William the Leper, 43
 Witchcraft, Accusations of, 123
 Wolsey, Cardinal, 41, 113
 Woodville, Elizabeth, 76
 Wool-market, 112
 Working Men's College, 144
 Wycliffe, John, 73
 Wyggeston (Wigston) Hospital,
 New, 143
 Wyggeston Schools, 143, 144

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